

Woodwind

WOODWIND

AN ARTS PAPER

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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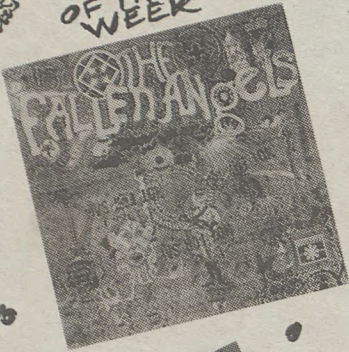
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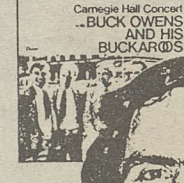
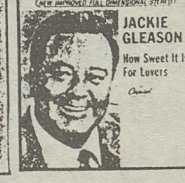
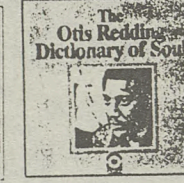
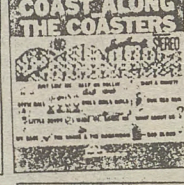
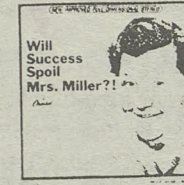
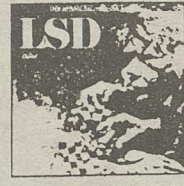
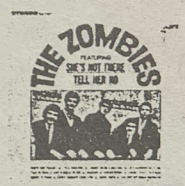
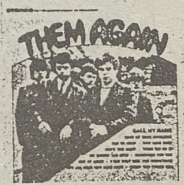
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Claude Jones and the Amazing Amoeba

By Donia Mills

I've heard of bands named after bulldozers and bands named after gum wrappers, and of course groups named after the lead guitarist or the virtuoso organist or the prima donna vocalist. But a band named after the equipment manager and chief engineer?

Well, why not? After all, the prime Claude Jones manifesto is: In This Outfit, Nobody's More Important Than Anybody Else. There is no leader, no star, no single supreme authority in the group. Responsibility, limelight, and money are divided equally ten ways. Each member has one equal vote in decision-making procedures. And if it sometimes tends to slow things down some, like the filibuster, well, it also keeps the group on an even keel. In fact it has kept CJ together and performing for three years now, a relatively long time by local-rock-group standards. Especially considering the haphazard way they got together in the first place.

"You know the old myth about guys sort of falling into rock and roll bands?" remarks drummer Reggie Brisbane. "Well, with us that was exactly the way it happened."

Once upon a time, the story goes, there wasn't much going on around Claude Jones' house so he called up a few of his friends who played instruments, and suggested that they come over to his place and jam for a while. They did, and it sounded pretty good, and that night "Claude Jones" was hatched as a three-man group: Reggie on drums, Jay Sprague on bass, and Peter Blachley on lead guitar.

One day a few months later they stopped on the highway to pick up a friendly-looking fellow who was thumbing a ride, which turned out to be a fortuitous move since the hitchhiker was Mike Henley. They told him they were a rock group and he told them he was an organist, and suddenly it seemed like a good idea to expand their sound a little. He knew a vocalist too, Mike said, a guy named Joe Triplett who also played harmonica and wrote music himself. So then they were five. Next to be added were Frannie Day (rhythm guitar, vocals) and John Guernsey, who filled in once when Henley was sick. When Henley got well they just added a piano, instead of subtracting a musician, to give them a two-man interchangeable keyboard department. And finally there is John Hall, who alternates between rhythm section and equipment handling and belting out vocals on the group's more vigorous numbers.

Last August, Blachley retired from the world of rock music to become a yoga teacher. The acquisition of his replacement, Happy Acosta, was carried out in typically casual CJ fashion.

"I was up in Massachusetts," Happy recounts, "and Peter says to me, 'There's a job waiting for you down here, if you want it, 'But I stayed up here thinking they would surely contact me themselves. Meanwhile they were sitting down there waiting for me to contact them; when I finally came to DC to apply for the job they said, 'Hey, man where have you been?'"

The grand total outfit, including players, singers, equipment men, managers, wives, girlfriends and a large contingent of dogs, goes under the collective name of "The Amoeba". Now amoebas, you may recall from your old biology days are famous chiefly for their single-celled unity and their ever-changing shape. Go to a CJ performance, and you immediately see how perfectly the name fits the group.

II.

If your idea of a fun band is a band who is having fun, then by all means, catch the next Claude Jones gig that comes your way. I first saw them at Montgomery College in Takoma Park, a late-May concert held outdoors on a tennis court, which CJ somehow managed to transform into a big funky family party. The band members intermittently joked with the audience. Claude Jones sat on a box in front of the control board, every now and then stomping over to frown at a troublesome amplifier. Meanwhile Mrs. Claude Jones, a young blue-jeaned bride with great infectious *joie de vivre*, was dancing with various members of the audience -- including one very straight-looking fellow in a button-down shirt and tie.

About midway through the set somebody down front staggered up to the stage to make a request: he wanted some wine.

"We don't have any, man," Joe Triplett said apologetically. (Beer, tequila, yes. Wine, no.) But he would see what he could do, "Anybody got some wine for a friend?" he appealed to the audience. Someone came up with a bottle, the guy sat back down and the concert continued. A very natural thing to happen actually, since CJ on stage exudes such good-time warmth that you feel they're all just part of the gang.

"Establishing this kind of 'conversation' between the audience and the band is very important to us," Joe said afterward, "Ideally, you strive for a total absence of self-consciousness, for both the band and the audience. To look out there and see an ocean of dancing kids...I mean, that's cool. That makes it cool for us, too, when everybody's getting off like that. You can do no wrong."

When pressed a little further, the lead singer (who comes across like, yummy, right out of Marlboro Country, except for his inconspicuous pony tail in the back) explains that there were sometimes two divergent musical theories within the group. "Personally, I sort of believe in the Vince Lombardi school of musicianship...practice makes perfect. I think you need pressure to be really good. But then of course, I'm a singer, and a singer naturally needs to be surer of timing and self. Some of the other people go for more of a free-form type of thing, they like to jam, bounce off each other--they figure if they do enough of that together it's gonna come out right in the end. And since we always decide things by everybody putting in their two-cents worth, what we finally come up with is usually a combination of the two."



However they come up with it, it's a great combination. In addition to CJ's original material (written mostly by Joe and John Guernsey) they beef up their school and dance gigs with a number of old standard rockers. To familiar sounds like the Stones' "Not Fade Away" and Smokey Robinson's "You Really Got A Hold On Me" CJ brings a whole new dimension which can only be appreciated in context. While giving the illusion of utter laxity, they are really quite controlled. At one point which I, at first, mistook for a break, guys started laying down their instruments and wandering to the edges of the stage to chat with friends or take a nip. John Hall was shaking the maracas around a little, nothing serious. Then Jay started putting down a little bass line, which Reggie was sort of keeping up with, and one by one all these guitars and keyboards kept joining in until finally the whole crew was screaming "Luceeee-ILLE!" at top volume, to everyone's great delight.

Just like, you know, a big old musical amoeba.

III.

It is CJ's determination to retain complete control of their own musical affairs that recently led them to produce a record themselves, on their own "Sweet Breeze" label rather than sign with a major company. Two years ago they were offered a \$45,000 contract by Mercury Records, but they finally decided to turn it down after 34 contractual pages of small print. The Amoeba simply did not dig the idea, of signing away its free-form soul for three long years, in areas ranging from ownership of the group's name to tape distribution rights in Japan.

But recording is inevitable for any group who has achieved a certain stature, as CJ has, and wants to move up to the next level. Because of course a record means automatic promotion, and promotion means better booking agents, which means more prestigious gigs with more money, which means more exposure, which means even better gigs and even more money, and that's the whole idea, isn't it? I mean, it's just against human nature or something, to be content with standing still. "You gotta move." CJ's solution was to cut an "EP" on their own--a record the size of a 45 single, which plays at 33 1/3 speed and has two or three songs on each side. The album cuts are all first-rate songs, 17 minutes of good, solid listening music--financed by Don Johnston, produced by Claude, and mixed with great loving care by the entire group. That's the way they wanted it.

"Instead of doing a full-sized, full-priced album with a few good songs and the rest fillers," Claude explains, "we wanted to put out a record with a maximum of good music at a minimum cost, for our friends who know us and like our music."

If the record sells for \$1.50, as now planned, their friends will surely be delighted. Moreover, this remarkable musical bargain is likely to make new friends for Claude Jones besides.

The songs include "Sykesville" (a song written by John Guernsey, with a folkie ragtime sound that runs counter to the anguish of the lyric), "Lesson To Learn" (a country-flavored ballad composed by Joe and Peter Blachley), and a three-in-one composition of Guernsey's: "Lonely", "I Talked to a Man Today" and "Kuan Tai" -- the latter with a gorgeous melody guaranteed to keep you humming for days. (There's an interesting rumor about "Lesson to Learn" that goes something like this: Nils Lofgren (of Grin) liked this CJ number so much that he learned it himself, and sang it for Neil Young during that legendary session. After which Neil went home and wrote "Helpless". Which later appeared on the CSNY "Deja Vu" album, and certainly does sound an awful lot like "Lesson To Learn", falsetto and all.)

John Guernsey's cup runneth over with artistic as well as musical talent, as evidenced by the jacket design he provided for the record. It's an etching of a family, mother and father and child, each individual a graceful extension of a single flamelike form -- somehow very suitable for a Claude Jones album. And on the back cover is a photograph of the railway station in Sykesville, Maryland, where the state hospital is located. No, John insists, the album's not supposed to have a psycho connotation or anything like that. "It just happened that on the day we were mixing the song "Sykesville" there was this big photo of the Sykesville RR station in the newspaper. It was such an amazing coincidence we decided we had to have it, so we contacted the photographer and he was really nice, said he'd be glad to let us use it for the cover."

When the record is released locally, pending distribution arrangements, it will be the second album by a major Washington group to appear this year.

Manager Mike Oberman, who has been with Claude Jones since their earliest days as a trio, feels that the Washington music scene definitely has its advantages. For instance, in what other city could you play gigs at the Monument Grounds and the Women's National Democratic Club and the British Embassy? (With Lady Harlech photographed sitting in on drums, to prove it?)

"And the DC scene is small enough everybody knows everybody else, it's a lot friendlier than a cutthroat place like New York where the competition is so fierce. Here it's not unusual for one group to call up another group and say hey, there's such-and-such a job we can't handle, you want to take it for us?"



IV.

Since Worthy Causes are so plentiful in the nation's capital, CJ has played more than its share of free gigs--from GROK concerts to benefits for Emergency and Woodwind and Peace.

There have also been a few times when CJ didn't plan to give free benefits, it just turned out that way. Like the time they went down to play at the Richmond Free University, and on the basis of packed-house predictions agreed to a deal whereby they would be paid 50% of the receipts. When they got there, the place had a six-foot wide hole in the ceiling and no heat, and the temperature was six-degrees above zero. Peter's fingers were literally freezing to the strings. But there were fifteen people in the audience, sitting there in six-degree weather, so the show went on. They made \$10 that night, which didn't begin to cover expenses down there.

At the other end of the spectrum is the week Claude Jones played at the Cellar Door last August, a prestigious gig enjoyed by very few local groups. "Although David Steinberg wasn't exactly the most ideal act for us to be billed with," recalls Connie Sprague. "The audience was of course older and straighter and I think we sort of startled them. I remember this one lady sitting in the front row, when the guys came on stage she took one look and said 'I can't believe it.'" Knowing the group, however, it's safe to assume she was a bit more of a believer by the end of the set.

And then there are Gigs With a Sense of Humor, such as the one they did recently at Maryland U. for the Mayday Bail Fund. When they arrived at the hall they found it swarming with greasers: slicked-back hair, leather jackets, chains, a few minor rumbles, the works. And then in this corner you had Claude Jones, a bunch of peace-loving freaks with beards and guitars, scared you-know-whatless. "Turned out it was a Greaser Party," says Oberman. "All the freaks had dressed up like greasers and slicked their hair back and were playing the role. So we pulled out all our old rockers from back in the fifties and played a real greaser set---it was great."

And last but not least, Gigs With a Happy Ending. When Mr. and Mrs. Claude Jones were married last December at a chapel in the National Cathedral, the band played for their reception. A festive occasion, no doubt about it, with the Consciousness II parents and the Consciousness III offspring all grooving together like you've never seen before or since. (Immense quantities of champagne being one of the most effective methods of bridging the generation gap.)

What happened when the band that plays together stays together?

The answer to that query is the story of the Amoeba farm, which could easily be a book in itself. CJ members recall with nostalgia the year (October '69 to October '70) they lived on the Culpeper County farm, 150 acres fronting along the Rapahannock River. It was the closest they ever came to actually living their communal ideal. Out of the money they made playing each performer was paid one dollar per gig. The rest went into the community fund.

"See, we had this plan" says John Hall. "We thought if we could all support ourselves and make living expenses with part-time jobs, then we could take the money we made as a band and save it up for a down payment on a piece of land in Canada."

Admittedly, it was a great concept--thirteen people all living and working together towards a common goal like that. The *Post* and *Star* and *Washingtonian* all did features on the group. And in August, when the "Caravan of Love" passed through DC on their national free-concert tour, the bands set up camp and stayed down on the Amoeba Farm. (They made a movie of the Caravan, which is due out this fall).

Legendary cats like Wavy Gravy, Hog Farm, Jack Casady, Jorma Kaukonen--165 of them. In eleven huge thirty-foot-high tie-dyed tepees. "It was the most unbelievable sight you'd ever want to see," they all tell you, shaking their heads with faraway visions of glory: skinny dipping at midnight, Hot Tuna jamming down by the river.



V.

All Edens have their serpents, though, and the Amoeba Farm was no exception. The Commune discovered, as rural populations have been discovering for decades the expenses and hardships of country living. Especially since work was inevitably centered in DC, which meant many hours of commuting. "We were living in our cars half the time," says Jay. "We were spending about thirty dollars a week on gas alone." The convenient part-time jobs, when they did materialize, didn't turn out to be so convenient after all. And saving all that money was easier said than done.

Then too, there was the Great Pot Plot, just one more bad vibration to contend with. According to road manager Keith Krokyn, it was all part of a "Clear the Freaks out of Culpeper County" campaign being waged by some local candidates for the upcoming elections. "When they busted some friends of ours who lived down the road (on highly questionable charges that were eventually dropped), we figured it was just a matter of time. And at that point we sure didn't have a lot of spare bread around for legal fees."

Anyway--13 people, 13 different reasons, they all insist--the lease was not renewed last fall and they all moved back to town. This year, even though their playing is still very much together, they all live separately. Nowadays, for instance, you have to do a lot of moving to keep up with the Joneses. Claude and Debbie are keeping house in a large van along with a coonhound named Belle and a (sort of) sheepdog named Dylan, all very compact and cozy. There's a rug on the floor and posters all over the plywood walls and home is, well wherever they decide to park for the night.

The others live scattered about town in slightly less mobile fashion, supplementing their income by a variety of means--clerking at Discount Records; giving piano lessons; working at Drums Unlimited; doing a little auto body work on the side. And since they are all extraordinarily lovable guys (college-educated, even). There are always the ladies, more than happy to have them for dinner. It is darkly rumored that one member of the band even lives at home with his parents.

You know, it don't come easy.



Talking to them, you can't help sensing the frustrations of being a good band who wants to be just a little bit better, a little bit bigger. Could anyone have told them, starting out as a few kids jamming in Claude Jones' basement three years ago, about all the hard lessons they were to learn? Their music says it for them: "The world's just a little place, and it is constantly changing..." (Oh, the joys of redneck politicians and cigar smoking record company agents and hardnosed deal-making DJ's) "Sometimes you gonna get what you want, sometimes you gonna get burned..."

There've been a lot of ups and downs, sure," Oberman admits -- although it doesn't worry him too much, that's just the kind of business it is. If things look hopeless one day you just stick around, invariably they'll look beautiful tomorrow, "The group has a way of hanging together at times when it really counts, they've always been that way." Because in the final analysis, is there any better occupation in life than playing in a rock band? If you're a rock musician?

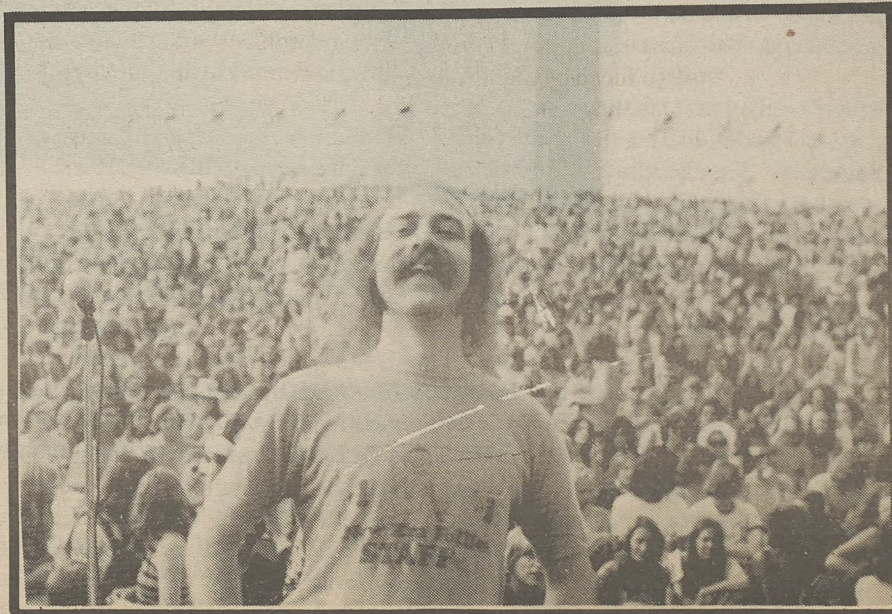
VI.

Although the group is naturally impatient to release their record as soon as possible, summertime is normally considered low ebb for the music business and they may settle on a fall release date, when schools are in session and gigs to help promote the album will be more plentiful.

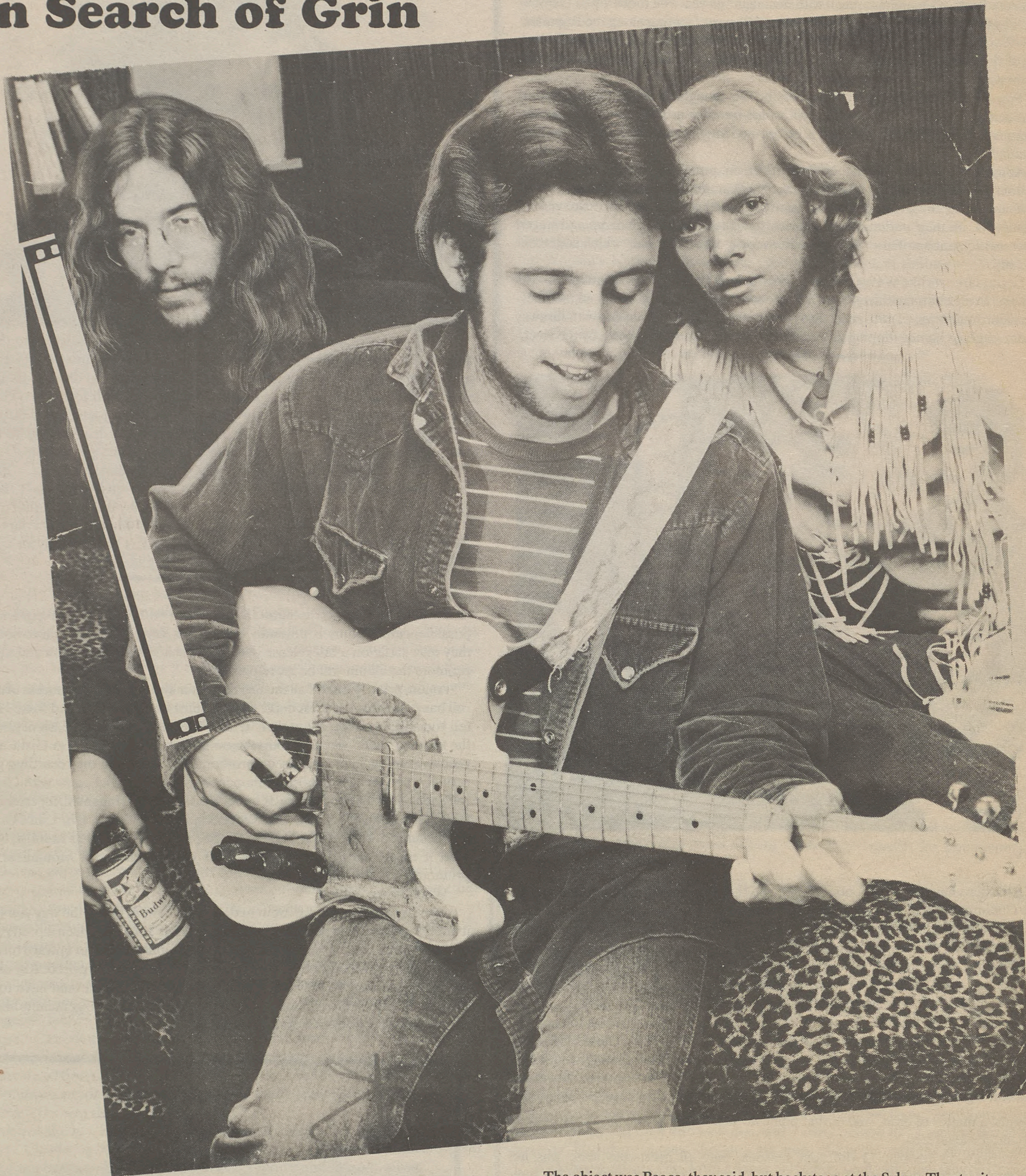
Again, promotion. Of all the ingredients in the commercial success of a rock and roll band possibly the least noble and the most necessary. Joe and Mike Henley can tell you a thing or two about that, in fact. They enjoyed a brief flash of glory back in the summer of '65 when a group they were in recorded "What A Girl Can't Do", a tune written by John Guernsey's brother Tom. Although the recording group was actually the Reekers (whose drummer was Bob Berberich, now with Grin), it was released by Monument Records under the name The Hangmen, a performing band that Tom got together after the Reekers split up. "What A Girl Can't Do" took off and became a #1 hit for a while in the DC area--and, Joe says ruefully, who knows what it might have done in other parts of the country, if Monument had only promoted it a little nationally?

Who knows, indeed?

If success means the freedom to do what you want to do, the way you want to do it and be appreciated and paid for it then Claude Jones has been a pretty successful outfit all along. And if the appearance of their album marks an upward turning point in their history, nobody who knows their music will be too surprised. Although I must say, in all selfishness, I'd hate to see them get too big-time and have to leave us. They're all such open and honest and unpretentious guys, so genuinely likeable, you almost feel they'd hate to do it themselves.



In Search of Grin



By Donia Mills

I. SATURDAY, April 24th, WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS. IN WHICH THE REPORTER TENACIOUSLY HANGS ON BACKSTAGE HOPING FOR A CLOSE-IN VIEW OF GRIN'S LAST LOCAL APPEARANCE FOR A LONG WHILE, MAYBE.

The object was Peace, they said, but backstage at the Sylvan Theater it was more like War -- a battalion of stoned freaks storming Hamburger Hill. Marshalls throwing kids off stage, security throwing kids off stage, marshalls carrying unconscious bodies offstage, security throwing marshalls offstage, distraught parents searching for runaway children. Pete Seeger picked his way gently around Swamp Dog's mountain of equipment, looking a little bit dazed by the whole thing.

Meanwhile there were several dozen remaining on stage who had a "good reason" for being there, including three musicians whose good reason was that they were actually supposed to set up their equipment and play a set of music in the midst of all these marvels, despite the fact that the mikes wouldn't work, the PA wouldn't work, the lights wouldn't work, and the crowd was fast breaking down. Or up. Or something. "Why don't you just get out there and jam?" suggested the management. "Even if they can't hear you? Until these sound people manage to get it on, huh? How about it, guys?"

"Grin? Who's Grin?" demands one hostile peacenik from New York who has just been thrown off the stage for the third time.

"I don't know," says his friend, infinitely world-weary. "After all this, they'll probably get out there and play a set of Archies."

"Grace under pressure" best describes Grin's contribution to peace as they just got out there and jammed, for about fifteen minutes--sounding pretty good, considering. Their style on stage is very controlled, none of your flashy, freakshow routines. (After all, urinating on amplifiers and smashing guitars on stage doesn't make for better music, it makes for smashed guitars and wet amplifiers, right?)

By the time they move into the hard-rocking beat of "Slippery Fingers," the New York critics have stopped making their snotty comments.

"They just put out an album," a loyal fan informs them coolly. "They're going to New York next week for this big promotional show Columbia's throwing for them."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah. Then they're going back out to California to cut another album. Probably play a couple of big places out there, go on a national tour."

"The big hype, huh?" says World-Weary.

"They write all their own stuff. Nils Lofgren, that kid on lead guitar? He writes all their songs."

"Which one?"

If you're lucky, from that stageside angle, you can occasionally catch a glimpse of Lofgren from between a marshall's legs. Singing out raunchy lyrics into the feeble mike. Or bent over his guitar, really getting into it, slippin' all over you! Frazzed-out hair bathed purple by the sometimes working spots. Bob Berberich and Bob Gordon are giving it all they got, too, like it was Constitution Hall or something, complete with paying guests. Can't say they didn't try.

"He's always going around doing guest shots on other people's albums, too. Neil Young. Crazy Horse. Plays piano, guitar, you name it. And they're gonna get another guy, I heard. This guy Danny Whitten, used to be in Crazy Horse, he's joining Grin. Supposed to come in this weekend."

World-Weary raises his eyebrows.

"This is probably their last gig around here for a long time, man."

Grin winds up yet another great sound, "End Unkind," and the announcer calls out for a big hand, from all those folks who couldn't hear them. The boys do not linger fondly about the stage. They make for the parking lot, where more marshalls are holding back more fans trying to beat down the fence. What is it about peace festivals, anyway?

Eventually, their guitars, amplifiers, PA, equipment manager, selves and old ladies are loaded into the big white van with "Mrs. Smith's Pies - Delicious!" painted on the side. They pause to give passage to an "ambulance" bearing yet another fallen acid case, and finally trundle off through the trees. So long D.C. A hapless departure if ever there was one. It would be nice to see them return in glory, wouldn't it?

II. SUNDAY, April 25. MONROVIA, MARYLAND. IN WHICH THE REPORTER MEETS SOME VERY HAIRY DOGS AND PEOPLE DOWN ON THE FARM.

It's a very domestic scene, a long way in miles from the Monument Grounds, but an even longer way in spirit. A big white farmhouse, surrounded by hilly cornfields and neat red barns and split-rail fences. A good spot for retreating and getting it together, if you've got something to get together, which Grin does. The Columbia Press Party is Thursday, and Whitten has arrived from L.A. only the night before, which leaves about three days to get a good solid set together, including teaching Danny all the songs. Definitely an uptight situation, but is anybody panicking? Hell no. Everybody is out on the balcony, drinking Michelob. This is called "taking a break."

As I come onto the porch a large dog barks and snarls, trying his best to discourage me. He is Grin's press agent, I realize later. Courage!

Inside I meet more dogs, German shepherds and Irish setters and many puppies of indistinguishable breeds, in varying sizes. I wander about taking note of tile incredible decor -- snake skins, nude lady portraits, posters of Jimi Hendrix, Jesus Christ, Cream, and a hand-embroidered tapestry of puppies. In the center of everything sits a large electric hockey game.

Eventually I even stumble across a person, equipment manager

Steve Jensen, who works quietly in the background seeing to it that the sound Grin makes is the sound you hear.

And in the practice room there is Bob Gordon, who plays a very driving bass and looks an awful lot better in person than in the album photo. We start out with some mundane questions about the group's early experiences. It seems he and Nils around 1968 were playing in Bethesda with a group called the Shot. Or was it Nils and Berberich playing around 1968 in Bethesda in a group called the Dolphins? Oh, dear. Nobody's too clear on dates. Nobody much cares. Anyway, it was 1969, maybe, when the winning combination of Bob, Bob and Nils formed Grin, to play to the standard run of teen clubs, rec centers, high school dances and even a few gigs at the "Bluesette" in Baltimore.

"We were just messing around," recalls Berberich, who plays

drums and sings lead in a delightfully guttural voice ("I'd hit ya in the mouth, but honey you know I'm lazy!") and looks an awful lot more visible in person than on the album photo. "We've never been heavy or political at all, we just play music for

people to have a good time. We used to do a lot of those free GROK concerts down in D.C. When the Free Press used to throw parties down at St. Stephen's Church, everybody just freaking out and having fun."

Was there a turning point?

"Well, yeah, I guess you might call it that. When Nils met Neil Young here in town."

Nils played for Neil and Neil really dug it, and said why didn't the three of them come out to California? Which was a great coincidence, because they planned to go out there anyway, and now they had a friend to show them around. Who he mainly showed them to was David Briggs, a young producer who lived in Topanga Canyon and let them crash at his place while they were playing gigs at the nearby Corral. (This Canyon, one gathers, is to the L.A. music scene what the Watergate is to Republicans.) It was spring of 1970 when they recorded the album "Grin" with a little vocal help from their friends on some cuts--namely Neil Young and Crazy Horse.

Lofgren retains complete control of his own material by owning his own publishing company, Hillmer Music. "Spindizzy" is Grin's own label, produced by Briggs, distributed by Columbia.

Why did it take a year between the recording and the releasing? is a question which may have occurred to local Grin fans as D.C. papers kept pronouncing "any day now" for months. In retrospect, it's an amusing little tale, the sort of thing you sit around and laugh about later, in more prosperous days. Finding out somebody else already had dibs on "Thunder Records" by the time the labels got printed. Jetting back and forth to the West Coast for repeatedly unphotogenic photo sessions. The fall 1970 release of a single off the album, "We All Sung Together/See What a Love Can Do", which did not exactly tear up the Top 40 charts. And just the general red tape connected with being a subsidiary of a huge--but prestigious--outfit like Columbia.

And how about the recording, were there hassles with the recording?

"No," says a tall red-bearded stranger who seems to know what he is talking about. Bless me, it's David Briggs. (An eclectic sort of guy, to judge by his roster of other artists --Neil Young, Tom Rush, Spirit, Alice Cooper, Donovan.) "These guys are an incredibly together group, all individually good yet they complement each other well, no ego problems. I mean, they all like each other, which helps a lot."

But why Grin? I ask, not meaning to sound disrespectful.

Out of all the hundreds of local groups all over the country cutting first albums with great expectations, what makes you so sure Grin is going to take off and go all the way?

"They've got the music," he says simply. "A lot of people around can sing and play instruments, but it's the songs that usually make or break you in the end. Look at Dylan, the Stones, even Neil Young--they didn't make it on classically great voices, they made it on music. Nils is a great writer, he's got amazing energy and versatility, and he's very well respected in the business. He writes material anybody could do. You watch -- within six months other people are going to be picking up his stuff."

(I admit it's an intriguing idea, Peggy Lee doing "Like Rain". The Band on "Outlaw". Englebert Humperdink with "Pioneer Mary" and on "We All Sung Together" the Norman Luboff Choir.)

"He's very young, and very talented," Briggs sums up. "The kid is nineteen years old. It's the Great American Hero Dream."

Granted, asking a producer about his latest pet artist is a little like asking a Jewish mother about her son. But there seem to be plenty of other musicians to support these claims, like Neil Young, who asked Nils to play piano on his highly successful "After The Gold Rush" album. And Steve Stills, whose newest unreleased album includes Lofgren's guitar and vocal work. And piano and guitar for Greg Reeves. And of course the Crazy Horse album, to which he contributed "Beggar's Day" and "Nobody" along with his voice and guitar. Now there are others in the works.

Enough, enough.

Where does Danny Whitten fit into all this? He's tall, blonde and easy moving, and he's been called the "best emotion singer" and the "best rhythm guitarist" in the business, which isn't bad for openers. During another break I track him out to the balcony where he is plucking absently at an acoustic guitar rimmed with decals from Georgia, Jacksonville, Tennessee, Miami, North Carolina, Virginia.

A Southern Gentleman! Well, more or less. (Maybe the fact that he hasn't slept in three days has something to do with it.) He's originally from Columbus, Georgia, half Cherokee and half Irish and English and Scottish and all that stuff. There was an early group called the Rockets, and a place called the Pink Pussycat. And, um, let's see. Much later, the Whiskey a-Go-Go in L.A. That's where Neil Young heard his group playing, asked them to come over and jam with him sometime. Which they did, later joining him as Crazy Horse, cutting albums with him, accompanying him on three major tours.

I ask Danny about the good old days (?) with Neil and Crazy Horse, and his reasons for splitting. He opens his mouth: many tales flicker through those weary eyes; he closes his mouth -- "I don't want to talk about it" best summing up his feeling at the moment. A gentleman after all!

And a remarkable song writer too, author not only of the strikingly beautiful title mentioned above, but also of such stompers as "Downtown" and "Dirty, Dirty" and more, all happily available on the Crazy Horse album.

His joining Grin means several significant things -- like adding another fine guitar, and another fine voice, and another strong writer of original material. And

with Nils equally proficient on guitar and keyboards, Grin can open up its sound in live performances with Nils on piano-organ while Danny holds down lead guitar, see?

Break time is over: all dogs and reporters who have wandered into the practice room are politely escorted out by Nils Lofgren. So I sit outside the door, listening to the interesting sounds of musicians putting music together. Everybody's gotta hear everybody else. Let's quiet down the second verse. Think we should do that one acoustically? Maybe you should rent a really good PA when you get up there. Hey wait a minute, our PA is loud as shit, man. (Grin's PA has stood by them, by God, and Grin's going to stand by their PA!)

Waiting for the next break, I begin to despair of ever pinning down the curious, frazzle-headed, unshaven creature who is the key to this whole ball game and has been steadily eluding me all afternoon. If you can read a man in his music (and if not there, where else?) then you're really faced with a bewildering portrait. Even leaving aside his latest compositions, the album cuts (all written at age eighteen or younger) present a body of music that is at the same time quiet and tender ("Take You To The Movies Tonight"), loud and rough ("I Had Too Much"), young and idealistic ("We All Sung Together", "If I Were A Song"), country-wholesome and ragtimey ("Everybody's Missing the Sun"), wistful and complex ("Like Rain", "Pioneer Mary") and downright erotic ("Open Wide", "Direction"). What is it with him, anyway?

The door opens, the hairy ones straggle out.

"Okay, why don't you ask me one quick question, right now?" Nils throws back over his shoulder en route from one room to another.

By the time I phrase the question he is already out back, perched on a porch rail, strumming thru "If I Were A Song" for Danny, which sounds great, even on a strum-thru. Briggs sits by tapping his foot with the satisfied smile of a man who has just invested in some very promising stocks. The sun is rapidly going down beyond the neighbor's barn and it's a long drive home.

I bid them farewell, lamenting all the unasked questions. Do friendly people make you shy? Do you meet the kind of friends that always end? Do you come terrified at these discussions?

If this was a paying job, I decide, I'd probably get fired.

III. MONDAY, April 26. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY. IN WHICH THE REPORTER GOES TO A ROY BUCHANAN CONCERT AND EFFECTS A FORTUNATE REUNION WITH SOME OLD FRIENDS IN THE FRONT ROW.

From both the look and the sound of things in Gaston Hall Auditorium, we could've all suddenly died and gone to heaven: holy crests, saints and crosses everywhere, gilt carvings, velour draperies behind medieval arches. On the wall above the stage, the blessed virgin holds up a book inscribed simply with "Alpha and Omega"--which pretty well sums it up.

A cheer of anticipation bursts forth as Buchanan strolls on stage with a cigarette and a Schlitz and that bemused, deep-eyed Mona Lisa smile that makes you wonder what, if anything, he's thinking as he plays.

And then there are the sidemen: funky, rocking little Joe Bayliss on organ and Don Monahan on bass, both from the Crossroads Tavern in Bladensburg where Roy Buchanan plays nitely except Mondays. (The big fellow named Tiny who used to play bass? He quit the band just recently to become a preacher.) And then we have here Bing McCoy from Sageworth and Drums, on piano, and on drums -- can it be? Our very own Tom Zito, in a Mickey Mouse tee shirt? Come on.

Well now look, demand certain critics, if he's the greatest rock guitarist in the world, why isn't he famous? Why doesn't he play with famous people? Why doesn't he do Carnegie Hall. Why isn't he rich?

Truly, not since the days of Herod and Satan hassling Jesus has a thirty year old guy been so shouted at to get the lead out and make something of himself, but Buchanan is going to walk on water when and where he pleases. (The Rolling Stones reportedly asked Buchanan to join them in Brian Jones' place and Roy says no thanks. But Tim Francis and Larry Rohter, a couple of admiring students, ask him to play a couple of shows for the Georgetown Food Coop at a buck-fifty a head, and Roy says oh well why not? Obviously, there are levels of the sublime that reach beyond mere expertise.)

I mean, it's the Concert on the Mount, folks, and if you don't believe it just ask anybody who was there.

Ask Nils Lofgren, for instance, who is planted firmly in the front row, waxing so enthusiastic that he has indeed become as a little child. He is the only person in the audience with the distinction of having written a whole album full of songs and recorded them and dedicated them to Roy Buchanan. (Roy probably doesn't even know about it yet. It doesn't even matter, really.)

"I dedicated it to him because I didn't want anybody to think I was trying to copy his technique without giving him credit, you know what I mean? He's the greatest guitarist in the world, he can play a song the way I can only think it. If I could really play out of myself like that, just the way I feel it, that's how it would come out."

Wow. Straight answers at last, and lots of them.

"I have a thousand different moods, I write the way I feel at the moment. And the music comes first, usually, I carry around a bunch of tunes in my head and put

lyrics with them as they come to me. Because you know, a certain set of words can only mean one thing, but a tune can fit a lot of different lyrics."

I ask him about "Outlaw," which intrigues me.

"Those lyrics are a little hard to understand. I made it that way on purpose. I was trying to get that feeling of helplessness the blind boy has when the outlaw tells him 'son, stand in the corner, if I kill your sister, that's too bad.' I just had to imagine myself in his place, to get down that feeling. Yeah, I like that song."

And?

"Well, 'Like Rain'. I guess because it means a lot to me personally, it came from something that really happened."

(Yes. Somehow you can tell.)

Over to one side, a tall good-looking black chick confers with her friend and finally comes up to Nils shyly.

"Hey, I just bought your album," she says.

"Did you? Great. Do you like it?"

"Yeah, I sure do!" She smiles and sidles on away, whispering with her friend. He's a character right out of Oliver Twist, he is, just like he comes across on stage. Five foot three, not counting hair and hat ("Pretty short, huh?"), bundled up in all kinds of shirts, one on top of another, with a gnarled braid tie knotted around his neck like a talisman.

I inquire gently about the condition of one intermediate-level shirt, whose green plaid faded flannel sleeves are ripped from cuff to shoulder and flapping around his elbows. If the album sales go well, I wonder, does he think maybe he could afford a new one?

"No, no," he says with sudden concern. "This is a good shirt, I've had this shirt for a long time. I like plaids."

He also likes his family, which becomes immediately evident when Mr. Lofgren arrives with his three younger sons and they all settle into the down-front seats that Nils has taken great pains to save for them. It's remarkable, the warmth and affection bouncing from Lofgren to Lofgren almost visibly. The other boys play instruments also, I am proudly informed, and Nils himself started out on accordion when he was six.

"But he was always interested in a lot of other things, too Mr. Lofgren adds. "For a while he wanted to be a professional football player, but that didn't quite work out."

While Roy Buchanan is actually playing, one doesn't exactly stand around chattering to Nils Lofgren. Or to anybody else, for that matter. From the first blasted chord of "SHOTGUN!" the crowd has been shrieking and groaning in one extended orgasm of disbelief that the guy up there in brown slacks, striped shirt and hush puppies is really for real.

"All the teenyboppers done had their say," Roy tells the mike in a heavy blues number. "Now I think I'm gonna try it my way." Oh, yessss! Photographers line up in front of the stage, snapping pictures as if that's going to prove what's going down here tonight. Forget it! Polydor Records has also sent people, to get the event down on tape, but how can you possibly get such an event on tape?

Now he's playing with his left hand only, wandering over there to blow his nose, drink some beer, smoke a cigarette with his right. The audience goes berserk. Standing ovations in the middle of songs. On "Malaguena" he sounds like a whole orchestra. Times Square on New Year's Eve. Now a violin, some radar bleeps, the Battle Hymn of the Republic -- and back into "Malaguena". Now watch the right hand -- he's turning knobs with the little finger while he picks with his thumb and forefinger and plucks with the other two. (No one would dream of storming the stage because it would be sacrilegious.) From "Tales of Brave Ulysses" to "Don't Bogart That Joint", from "Whiter Shade of Pale" to "Johnny B. Good" -- and the haunting four-note theme of "Roy's Blues", music for the publicans and sinners.

David Briggs has been sitting there all this time watching with a very covetous look in his eyes. David, thou shalt not covet Roy Buchanan.

"Listen, we've been working on him for a year, trying to get him to join Grin. And we haven't given up yet."

Wait a minute, what's that again? Grin, with Roy Buchanan on lead guitar? (Nils on keyboards, Danny on rhythm guitar, Bob on--no, no, this is too much. The imagination breaks down.)

It's well after midnight, and like it or not, the stomping, screaming multitude has to be content with one last encore. And the reporter has to be content with one last question.

"What makes us happiest? Performing, definitely. Doing live shows for live people. We love audiences that are alert and jumping, really ready to have a good time. Recording is OK too, but that's more like hard work, and you don't have that feedback from the audience letting you know you are doing all right, right on the spot. We'd like to be able to make great music for a crowd of fifty thousand people and keep everyone of them happy every single minute."

There were only about eight hundred that fit this description Monday night, straggling out of Gaston Hall still shaking their heads. Is there some underlying irony here? Roy Buchanan departing for Bladensburg with his wife and children to return on Tuesday to the Crossroads Tavern. Nils Lofgren departing for Monrovia with his producer, to go forth on Thursday to New York and beyond, to the world his idol apparently wants no part of. That legendary pressure-cooker world of motels and groupies and big limousines, maybe even crowds of fifty thousand, hopefully all the way. Except is that really all the way? After tonight's epiphany, one isn't so sure any more.



Crank

By John Zambetti

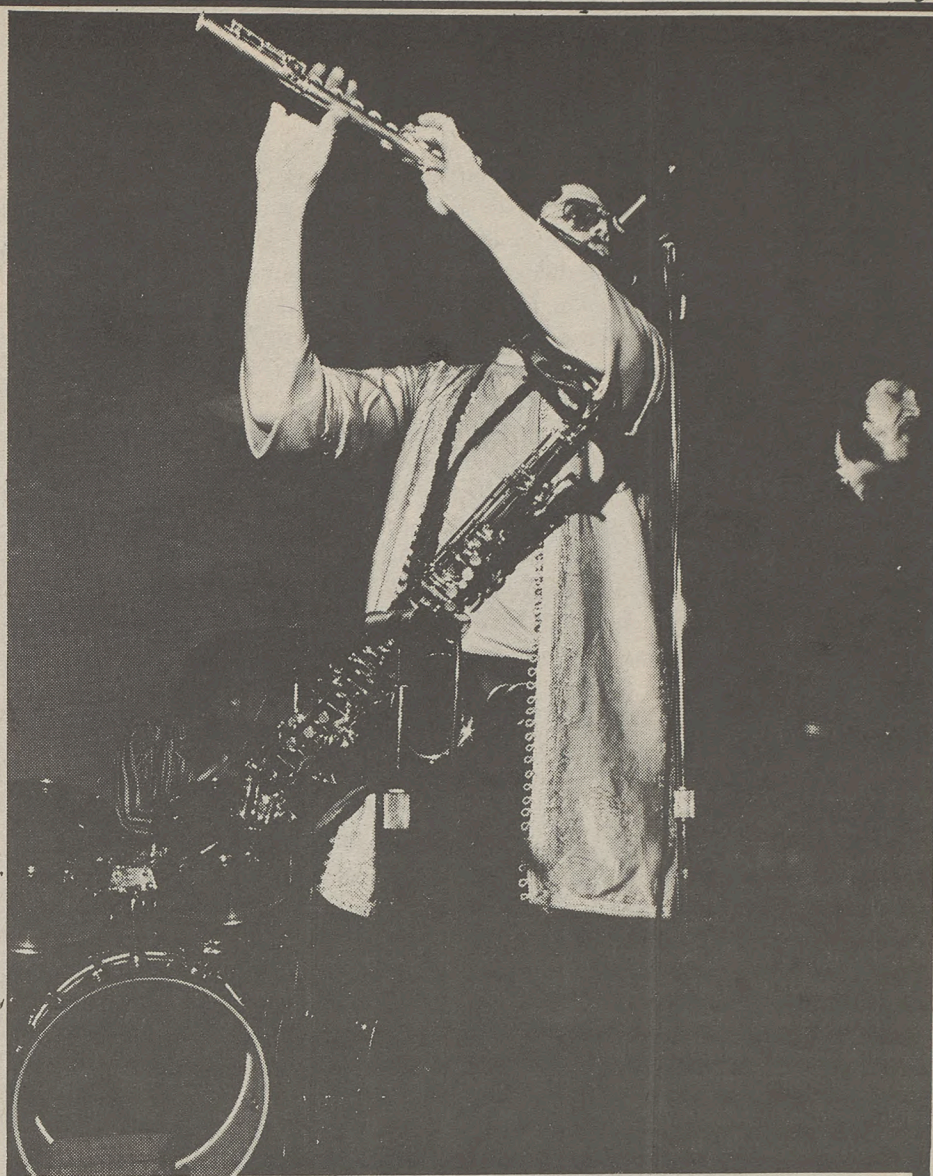
It's never easy being the first group on at a rock concert. Half the people in the audience are still finding a place to sit and the other half are impatient to see the main group they paid for. It doesn't make it any easier when the MC announces that the main group isn't going to show. Such was the introduction into show business for Crank last Saturday night, and they pulled it off perfectly.

Crank is the latest in a surge of Washington area groups and one of the few which shows real promise. Its uniqueness lies in its ability to successfully fuse jazz and hard rock, a feat which is talked about but is rarely accomplished. Crank has a musician named Bless. He plays sax, soprano sax, and flute and isn't content to play just one of these instruments per song. Switching from instrument to instrument, he compliments guitarist Jeff's leads and the vocals of Guy Bokoles. This description immediately brings to mind Jethro Tull, but Bless's versatility makes the difference.

The driving rhythm of the group is John Castle on bass and Guy Gengras on drums. Guy utilizes a double set of drums without trying to steal the stage from the rest of the group. His constant use of all the components of his set make him a true percussionist. John's bass work adds a powerful dimension to the group which, like all bass work, isn't noticed unless you look for it. The fusion of these lead and rhythm units comprises the music of Crank.

Their sets are a combination of original material and other groups' material done in Crankstyle. Their version of Mountain's "Long Red" begins with Bless doing the organ riffs on flute accompanied by Jeff's flat-picking on guitar. As the verse begins, the rhythm section comes in and Bless switches to sax. We are carried through the song forcefully only to be released by Bless's return to the flute and fading out. The group's true spirit is best seen through its original songs such as "Love Me the Way You Used To".

This group lives together and it is obvious in the ease and precision with which it makes transitions within the song. A switch from 4/4 time to 3/4 time within a break is pulled off so smoothly that it almost goes unnoticed. The only weak point in the group, if you want to call it that, is that it sometimes appears over-professional in its dealings with the audience. They have an excellent communicator in Bless and if they just let him handle the verbal interchanges with the audience, they should be alright. Crank is at Emergency all this week and shouldn't be missed.



In Memoriam

Bill 'Bless' Blessington
 Guy Dorsey
 Sid Sithens
 Rick Cladny
 Peter Sheridan
 Doug Dickey
 David Warren
 Pat Patterson



Grits

By Martin Walker

Wonder Warthog used to be a man with flaming red hair which wreathed empires and mazes around his head as he danced. It was of a length which had nothing to do with style or fashion or politics or culture. The length was but a quality of the hair, as natural and inevitable as cold weather in winter.

And Wonder Warthog is a fan. He loves the music of a group who has painted on its truck "GRITS-instant breakfast music". The word "grits" means a lot to them. One of their best compositions is called "as the world grits" and they even have a packet of the instant things in their kitchen.

And Wonder Warthog loved it all. But then Wonder Warthog was found by our worthy custodians of the public peace to be drinking an alcoholic substance -- on a Saturday -- in the street. So Wonder Warthog was in jail until monday and somewhere along the way of the experience (he is naturally reticent) most of his hair got lost.

Now the group GRITS was delighted with Wonder Warthog. He was a fan, a dancing fan and therefore cherished. And I first heard them play when they believed WW still to be in possession of hair and the grace that went with it. They were very good.

But the next day was a gig, and Wonder, shorn of his glory was there, and Grits was not so good. It was an open air performance at Reno Park and the crowd was thin and the girls too shy to dance with Wonder because his hair was, you know, normal.

I felt very bad about it all. I had heard GRITS before and liked their music and had met the people and liked them even more so I am blaming the bad performance at Reno Park on the people who made Wonder Warthog lose his hair. Some of the karma had gone sour.

But the music is still good. And Wonder Warthog's hair will grow again and Rick will write more music and maybe Amy and Tom will learn to play even more instruments. Already they play violin, viola and all the guitars. Then there is Rick the writer who sings some and plays the keyboards. Rick is hung up on the "Y" - his songs keep mentioning toes that get stubbed there and ties that are dry there. He used to be a music director at the Arena Stage. Tom studied at Oberlin Conservatory and drummer Bob came out of Eastern Carolina. Amy just lived with Rick. They speak in the same rhythm, as though their voices have grown together.

In their music, the rhythms vary to the point of discordance. Here a Sergeant Pepper, there a Zippy, hints of Sha-na-na and through it all a vein of humor which makes their set feel more like an off-Broadway satirical revue than a musical performance.

And thank God for that. They really are funny, I mean it. They have a classical piece called *Scherzo* which lulls you at the beginning into thinking it is simply a brisk little thing by Vivaldi but all of a sudden you are off on a whirlwind tour down European music. Almost pretentious romantic chords, tone poems - we get Ravelled up in tangles and then double time and it is over and you're laughing at the end because you were tricked three or four times, but you enjoyed it.

Then they have a sequence called "Back Seat Bunny/The Night You Told Me My Body Was a Must" which is funny in the way tricky lyrics at college pantomimes are funny. There is tradition here, we are taking off a fine old tradition but we love it really and this is only innocent fun. And it was innocent fun and it worked. Amy hungered over the mike like some stuffed and hungry blonde in the voice of a torch singer gave us those Shirley Temple wide eyes fixed on heaven and sang a song about bow a nice girl gets to be a whore and then Rick comes in with teenage saliva about



his back seat bunny. Amy's voice is an asset. They ought to use it more. She only belts a song once, in the last bars of "Feast of Flesh", and it sounded very challenging, defiant and pathetic at once, like Piaf in the rich days.

I have a soft spot for Amy. I was round at their house one night before the gig, listening to the rehearsal, eating watermelon and all and we were all packed into the room with the equipment and amplifiers and musicians. Amy was sitting on an amplifier and there was only candlelight and a tiny red light on the amp. Amy sat on the corner, legs apart and the light glowed between her legs. And as she played she tapped her foot and the thigh went up and down and the red light flicked on and off as her thigh blocked it from my eyes. All this at a hundred and plenty decibels. What's more, she has the kind of hair that gives her a halo when the light is behind her so she always looks as though she is in soft focus like the heroines in 30's movies.

Bob is the drummer. Bob Sims. From the profile he looks like Trotsky with a sparse goatee. His jaw looks so sharp that you can't believe there is enough flesh for the beard to grow in. From the front he looks more like Peter Fonda and he has that supreme drummer gift of being able to change pace without changing rhythm. Tom is the lean one with the thick hair over his face and the face, if not the eyes of a fanatic. He makes you think of deserts and evangelists in thin harsh robes. But his voice is amazing. It is like the Eiffel Tower. Every constituent part of it is metallic and sharp. Girders, rivets, rods and steel. But the overall shape and effect is curving and smooth.

Tom sings on a sequence they call "Emulsion". It stands for a combination of "Emily Icebound" and "That Old Illusion". In a way, this sequence is the best thing they do. It is heavily Beatles and could be straight from Sergeant Pepper. In their other songs, too often the lyrics are raw and the mood changes in the music too strident hammering home to us the fact that this is all experiment. This band is growing and the things they have absorbed, like Connie Francis's heartaches and the Beatles' acid era, come through clean and professional. It is in the gropings for their own coherence that the false notes, the ambitious failures, and jumble of styles come to confuse and disappoint the audience. But you know that this is what they have to do, because otherwise they would be playing what others have done. They are trying to do it for themselves.

As soon as their gig was finished, another group began. They were slick, could sound like an album (they sounded like any album, anytime, anywhere) and nobody felt involved. This new band had the kind of musicians whose hair was long, but really neat, baby-boy fluffy or TV-ad smooth. They were quasi-professional musicians and didn't play a false note. But they didn't play a great one either. At least GRITS plays the occasional great note. You get to understand Wonder Warthog.

GRITS can make him jerk [], and flow and even twist. This band is going a long way. Keep listening.

When the music's over
 turn out the lights
 turn out the lights
 turn out the lights,
 For the music is your special friend
 Dance on fire as it intends
 Music is your only friend
 Until the end
 Until the end
 Until the end.

As of this writing,
 Jim Morrison is still dead,
 He died in Paris.
 He had sung "This is the end"
 long before, and the lights --
 He asked them to turn out the lights
 in New Haven Connecticut
 because they hurt his eyes.
 The cops had mace'd him backstage
 and before long they were pulling him
 away from the crowd
 because they said he was giving
 "an indecent performance."
 He was always indecent. We were
 indecent with him.
 At the Post Pavilion one summernight,
 he wanted all the lights off, all the lights,
 so that we could be alone with him
 as he sang
 "Father?" "Yes, son?" "I want
 to kill you..."

Once he said, "I am the lizard king
 I can do anything."
 The arrogance of beauty.
 Later he explained to the LA Free Press
 "It's all done tongue in cheek. I don't think
 people realize that. It's not to be taken
 serious. It's like if you play the villain
 in a Western it doesn't mean that
 that's you, I don't really take that seriously.
 That's supposed to be *ironic*."

While he was a graduate film student at UCLA,
 they say he climbed naked to the top of a flagpole
 with his girl friend. With a girl.

One writer once marvelled that they'd let
 Morrison on television at all.

There he was, on the Ed Sullivan Show,
 writhing and contorting "while his vinyl
 imitation-leather pants revealed
 an unmistakable bulge."

The sweetness of his face was like
 cynicism itself. For he was calling forth
 all the dark little voices
 that our mothers and fathers told us
 we should keep silent even if we had to
 cross our legs and hold our breaths
 to do it.

Miami was the moment of truth.
 And the truth shall make you under arrest.
 It has come to seem like a nearly
 sacrificial act, and some photos of the concert
 show him holding a a lamb.

"I just held it for awhile,"
 Jim said later. "There was
 a lot of noise, a lot of commotion.
 It was almost deafening, but the lamb
 was breathing normally,
 almost purring like a kitten.

It was completely relaxed. I guess
 what they say about lambs to the slaughter
 is true."

Why did he give the Miami audience more
 than it had hoped for? "I think I was just fed up,"
 Jim said later, "with the image
 that had been created around me, which I
 sometimes consciously, most of the time
 unconsciously, cooperated with. It just got

J i m M o r r i s o n

By Tom Shales



too much for me to really stomach and so
 I just put an end to it
 in one glorious evening."

And then the trial.

Time for another Great American Irony.

One of Jim's friends recalled part of it
 in a rock newspaper. One witness, 18, "she's
 a checker in a supermarket,
 and she was shocked by Morrison
 and she tells that he pulled his pecker out of his pants,
 and this has ruined her life. Then on the lunch break,
 one of the groupies in the back of the court
 goes over to her and says, 'You're being too mean to Jim,'
 and the girl looks at the groupie and says,
 'Fuck off you little bitch!' and
 this is the chick

that's so upset by Morrison."

He got the maximum sentence
 down there in Dade County Florida
 and the judge suggested he was maligning
 his god-given talent. But he wasn't
 maligning it
 and god didn't give it.

God wouldn't want it to get around.

The world could hold only one Jim Morrison
 and now it has none.

When he wasn't out there being adored
 people say he was shy, quiet,
 and incredibly self-analytical,

"Usually when I go to a strange town,"

Jim said once,

"I just stay in the hotel
 and look out the window."

People said The Doors didn't grow musically
 and some others who got a little older
 like to pretend that he had never turned them on
 and never would again,

But he did.

And he will.

Wild child, full of grace,
 savior of the human race,
 your cool face....

He was the lizard king.

He could do anything.

(It was supposed to be *ironic*)

Alone with him, alone with him,
 all the lights, all the--

He was not theatrical;

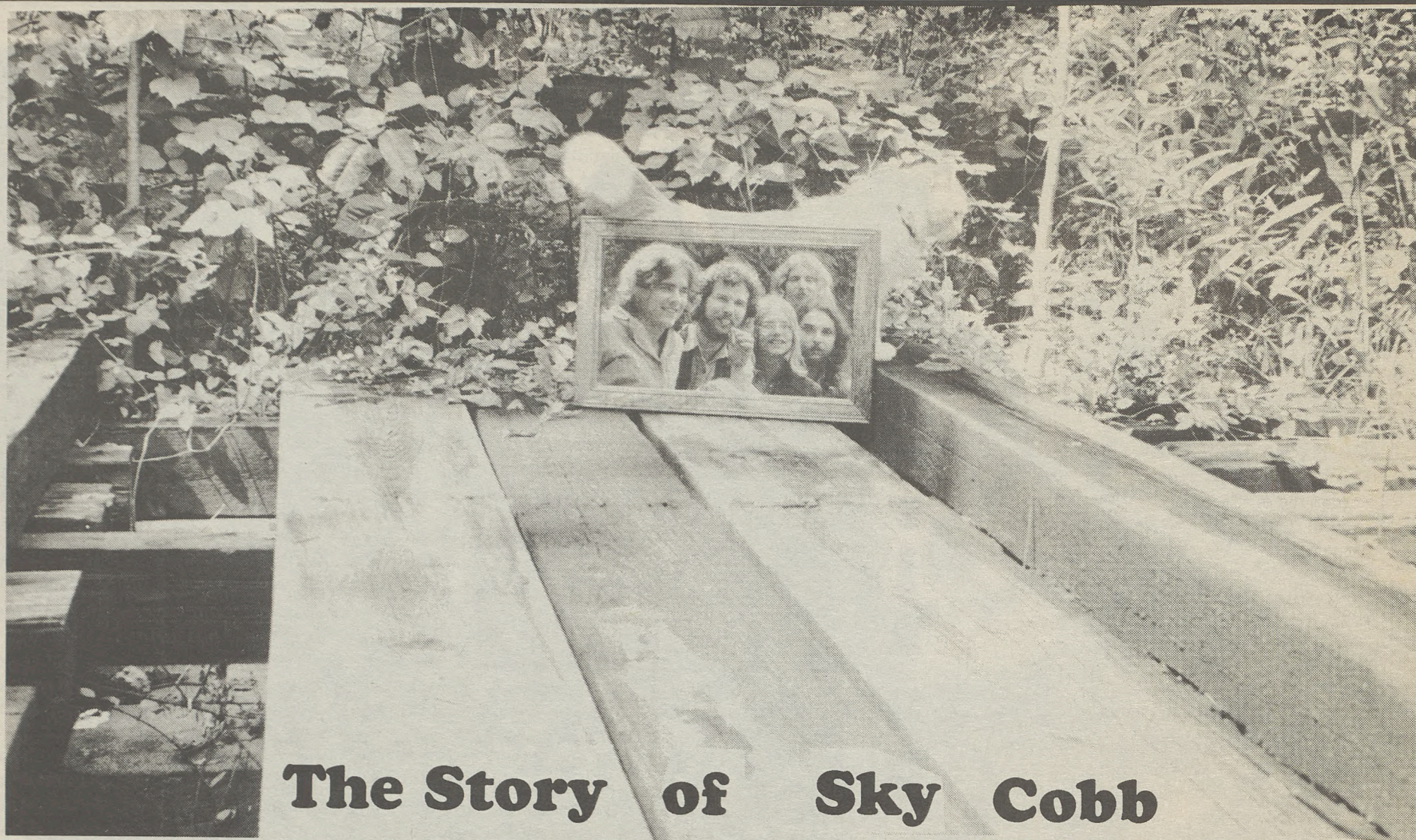
he was theatre.

He was not sexual;

he was sex.

James Douglas Morrison proved
 that the arrogance of beauty
 can be beautiful.

*The Crystal Ship
 is being filled
 a thousand girls
 a thousand thrills
 A million ways to spend
 your time
 When we get back
 I'll drop a line.*



The Story of Sky Cobb

Featuring Tales of the Cosmic Colonels, Hyattsville Horns, and other Rock n'Roll Legends of our time (city)

By Bruce Rosenstein

One day late last January, I heard on the radio about a great new band called Sky Cobb who was in its debut weekend at Emergency. It was billed with another then-new local band, Itchy Brother. Seeing the possibility of something good developing, I decided to head on down and check out this Sky Cobb.

After Itchy Brother's set, the stage filled with Sky Cobb's equipment. Besides the drums, bass, and guitars, were an organ, electric piano, plus saxophones, banjo, harmonica, and various percussion instruments. How many people were in the band? How often did they use all those instruments? My anticipation heightened. The only other thing I remembered about the band was that it had practiced for seven months prior to its first public gig, and that, of course, said something right there. It seemed to me that I was about to witness the second ever gig of not just any-old-band.

Well, gradually, the people who comprise Sky Cobb took the stage, and manned the instruments; just guitar, bass, drums, piano and organ this time. My first recollection of them on stage was a very short introductory statement by Greg Pugliese, sitting at the organ, something to the effect of "This first song is really quiet, you've really got to concentrate and listen hard..." And then, *wham!* Into a song that was anything but quiet and subtle. Propelled by Bruce MacKinnon's sharp piercing lead guitar, Sky Cobb reeled off a tight, fiery, movin' rock'n'roller based on Elmore James' "Dust my Broom" riff called "Loose Lovin' Lucy". They caught you off guard at first, then just blew you away not giving you any time/cause to think about it. It wasn't very far into the song that I definitely knew that Sky Cobb indeed wasn't any ordinary group of rock'n'rollers. For the rest of the gig, they just kept it up and everyone had a high time. I hadn't been so knocked out since that fateful night fifteen months before when I first saw another local band called Claude Jones. I went back the next day to catch them at a benefit, and they were just as good. All my enthusiasm of the night before was joyously confirmed that afternoon.

Now, not quite one year later, Sky Cobb seems to be in the position of number-one Washington band. It would be both redundant and depressing to recount all the recent negative developments in the local rock music scene, but talking about, (or better yet listening to) Sky Cobb is a positive aspect of what's going on here now. But, just as they were not another new band back in January 1971, they are not just another local band in January 1972. They are local in the sense that they live and do most of their gigging in the D.C. area, but Sky Cobb is destined to be a national band, from Washington, but a national band nevertheless. When will it happen? Oh, not tomorrow or the day after, not until they are ready, and they'll know exactly when that is. They always do. They don't do things in a hurry. When the time is right for something, they know it, and they'll do whatever's right. They are responsive to gigs out of the area (they were well received at Dr. Generosity's in New York last November) and they have recorded a promotional tape and will soon actively seek a recording contract.

For the purposes of orientation, satisfaction of curiosities and general information; Sky Cobb consists of five Washington musicians, aged 21-23: Greg Pugliese, electric piano, guitar, organ and vocals; Richard Sales, organ, electric piano, slide guitar, harmonica, saxophone, banjo, and vocals; Bruce MacKinnon, lead guitar, organ and vocals; Craig Warner, bass, and Mark Cuff, drums.

Richard, Greg, and Bruce are all prolific song-writers. You see, this business of who does what is not all that simple in Sky Cobb. When everyone is so talented and versatile in one band, you can't have one "leader" who tells the others what to do, or just one songwriter, or just one man to each instrument. Every aspect of Sky Cobb is thoroughly professional. Though their debut gig was in January 1971, they initially got together in June 1970, and practiced five nights a week for the seven months in between. Now, after being together for a year and a half, they maintain their schedule of practice every weekday plus a couple of nights a week. With gigs on weekends. And that's a big reason why they're still together and going stronger than ever before.

For the purpose of orientation, Sky Cobb didn't just pop up out of nowhere. All of the members have known each other since the earliest years of high school. In addition, everyone in Sky Cobb, at one time or another, was in the Jefferson Street Jug Band. Now, this outfit wasn't necessarily meant to be a big time folk group out to challenge the world or anything. It was more of a loose assembly of friends who dug old time jug band music, who did it on a non-businesslike level. The band started around 1966, and had its following, and then finally "broke up", if that is the right way to describe the band's end, in the summer of 1970, right before the formation of Sky Cobb. The Jug Band generally played standards like Henry Thomas' "Fishin' Blues" and others with few originals, and played them in parks, at Groks, in folk clubs and coffee-houses, and even one interesting gig in the summer of 1969 at the Memphis Blues Festival. That particular trip even got them a mention in *Rolling Stone*, unfortunately in the form of a cut by the story's author, a blues purist who inferred that the Jefferson Street Jug Band just wasn't pure and black and down-home enough for his tastes and were just along for the ride. Which wasn't the case, of course. The festival's organizer, Bill Barth, a member of the now defunct Insect Trust, and a friend of the jug band, personally invited them to play at the festival. They played a set with John Fahey, but their performance, unfortunately, wasn't included in the television show of the festival, done by National Educational Television.

The Jug Band also did some recording, and some sides apparently still exist, records that were made for a one man operation by the name of Fonotone Records. In the course of drifting in and out of the Jug Band, Richard was working with John Fahey, and had gone to California with him with some vague ideas to make an album, which, for a number of reasons now no longer important, never came about. While he was on the coast, Richard was getting the bug to do a really good rock'n'roll band,

and he began sending letters to that effect to the others, back in Washington. It turned out that they all felt the same way. They had all played in innumerable rock bands; especially Mark, who gigged for a while as Roy Buchanan's drummer.

The only other significant band in Sky Cobb's roots was Open Road, a rock band which was together until about the Fall of 1969. Playing lead guitar was Bruce MacKinnon, there was a drummer whose name has no consequence in our story, Greg played organ, and on bass was a local high school student named Seth Justman, currently the organist of the J. Geils Band. Open Road evolved from its beginnings as a blues band, moving into doing original rock, and near the end, original country tunes and also some soul material written by Seth. In the Fall of 1969, Seth split to go to Boston University where he eventually met up with J. Geils, and the band dissolved soon after. For the ensuing nine months, nothing monumental happened, but around June, everyone sensed that the propitious time for forming the rock'n'roll band was then there. Richard returned from California, the Jug Band -- which was never all that formal or stable an organization to begin with -- had finally split apart, and Richard, Greg, Bruce, Craig, and Mark were free to form Sky Cobb.

They all knew that this was to be no ordinary band, and right from the beginning they were after an existence loftier than gigging in high schools and bars. They were also after a record contract from the start, but not just any contract with just any company, for the sake of having a contract to show off. They had no manager at first, back in the summer of 1970, and, in fact, didn't have one until a couple of months prior to their opening weekend at Emergency. So, few people knew of Sky Cobb's existence during those hard working seven months as they practiced and polished until everything was right.

And then came that first highly successful weekend last January. Their music was so pure and fine, it was staggering. This was a rock'n'roll band, my man, and a damn good one. I didn't get to see them again until months later at a gig with Claude Jones at Glen Echo Park. Now, one thing I did remember about Sky Cobb, besides their musical excellence, was that although they did have fairly good stage poise, they didn't do too much moving around, and stage talk was at minimum, and most of what they did say was often so soft and mumbled that you couldn't understand it. It may have been nervousness, or maybe they thought talking with the audience just wasn't necessary. But, under the pavilion on that hot Sunday afternoon at Glen Echo, minutes before the start of their set, I noticed Greg wearing a short sleeved Hawaiian tourist's shirt. And when they started playing, he kept making comments to the audience that you could clearly hear and understand and was amazingly outgoing, leaping up out from the piano doing neat little routines with the microphone. All that time in between had brought about a strong stage presence, which managed to put everyone at ease.

At all the gigs I have been to since then, their stage presence has grown even stronger. So have all aspects of Sky Cobb. Maintaining that rigorous practice schedule has sharpened them continually. One thing they believe in is artists' constant changing and they certainly pursue that. Sky Cobb will not be content to stay with any one style, as so many bands have done. They recognize the inherent danger of becoming too comfortable with a particular way of doing things, which soon becomes mechanical and uninteresting. Their music cannot be labeled and that's exactly how they want it. If a band does even one country song, for instance, they instantly become a country band in the eyes of some of the audience. That's the reason that they don't do any out and out country songs (which is kind of a drag), but they do have an undeniable country influence and a blues influence and a jazz influence and a.... It all comes out as rock'n'roll and Sky Cobb's rock'n'roll. Try as you might, you're not gonna come up with one or two-word catch phrases to stick on them.

They are doing nearly all originals with a sprinkling of selected non-originals. They didn't spend those seven months rehashing old Chuck Berry songs. They've been working up new originals all along and at the moment, they have about 30 solid

originals to work from. They have a few songs used mainly to orient the audience, giving them something nice and familiar to work out on, and then the original stuff sinks in better. One of the best of these is their rollicking version of "Rainy Day Women 12 x 35", kicked off by a marching beat from Mark, and sung by Richard, who also plays harp on this one. His swooping voice cuts through everything, his eyes brightly aglow, as usual, his face and neck stretched tightly into a painful, vein-jutting contortion. "Everybody must get stoned!" In the beginning, they were doing "Fishin' Blues", which they've since dropped. They also do a killer version of "I'm A Hog For You Baby", which was the B-side of the Coasters' "Poison Ivy". And Guy Mitchell's "Singing The Blues" is given its deserved fate, a full production job with the backing vocals of the infamous Cosmic Colonels (in real life, the old ladies of the band) and the choreographed (more or less) movements of horn players Richard, Bruce, and Jamie MacKinnon (Bruce's brother), otherwise known as the "Hyattsville Horns".

Last Spring, they made a tape for promotional purposes and it was played for a number of people and given to a couple of local radio stations. Although the general consensus of the band today is that it is now beyond where those five songs are at, it is still a good representative choice of Sky Cobb material. The playing time of the songs averages three minutes and that's usually how it is live. Rarely do their songs go over five minutes. They say what they have to say swiftly and concisely. There are no 20-minute drum solos or long-winded, vacuous guitar rampages here. The tape opens with "Look Inside", written by Bruce, and it features saxophone played by Jamie, who is gradually being used more in Sky Cobb and is probably on his way to being a full member of the band as it begins to use horns more. "Fences To Mend" is incredible... a bouncy, catchy song that would make a great single. "Drippin' With Keys" is one of their better ballads, and "Your Grandmother" is a delightful tune dealing in imagery of reminiscences of an older generation, played with a ragtime feel. The tape ends with a pulsating rock item, "The Need", which is usually one of their longer songs on stage.

As for their other original material, "Loose Lovin' Lucy" is still used, a vestige of the Open Road days (if it ever gets on a record, Murray The K would surely use it in a "Lucy" set, along with "Lucille" by Little Richard, "Lucy" by Crabby Appleton, and maybe even "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds"). There are also a couple of leftovers from the Jug Band, "Honey Bun" and "Raccoon Raga", both riotous country-type rockers. They have original boogie, "One Fine Day", ignited by Greg's piano, an impossible song to sit still to. And then there's always their contribution to Mexican-rock, "Fill In The Blanks". And the number of originals will continue to grow and they'll move more towards their goal of becoming a national band. One of the interesting aspects of this is that it seems that more and more of the so-called "new" bands are just more combinations of existing national bands and there are a lot less "local" bands moving up to national stature. This can hurt, because the local bands, by their very nature, must go through a lot, gigging where you can -- which usually means high schools, bars, churches, "youth centers" -- and it all sharpens your playing. Sky Cobb recently played a "sock hop" and a strange gig at a school for retarded children in which they followed Ronald McDonald and a juggler, and did two twelve-minute sets.

They also recently did a very successful week at My Mother's Place, a bar near Dupont Circle, which has lately been bringing in quality rock music as a regular policy.

I caught their set on Thursday night of that week, which was the night of a dance contest, emceed by Barry Richards. After the break following their second set, the band took the stage to play for the dance contest as the hour of midnight neared. As if the stage weren't crowded enough, now sharing it with the band was Barry, ready to emcee, judge, give away albums to the winning couple. He informed the crowd that Sky Cobb had worked up a "special 50's set" for the occasion. "Okay, do the Chuck Berry song," Barry's voice boomed; and when nothing happened, he repeated his request/command and someone in the band corrected that it was not Chuck Berry, but Laverne Baker's blast from the past "Jim Dandy" and they were off into a wildly rocking version of the remnant from the R&B graveyard.

All during the song, who was standing right in the middle of things but Barry in his beard, bells, and tight shirt, surveying the crowd through his rimless glasses. It must have been quite a trip for him, standing up there with the band, even though he wasn't doing anything constructive. He was obviously digging it beyond all proportions. He even had his hand on one of the mikes and, as the first chorus approached, Greg had to tap him on the shoulder to move out of the way so he could sing. As the contest moved along, the band through Bo Diddley's "Before You Accuse Me", this one with Barry Richards on tambourine. Then came their unbelievable "One Fine Day" which is so powerful it would move a two ton rock, let alone a few dancers. Finally, the winners were chosen, but not until after Barry said at the song's end, "Okay, there's an original by Tractor," quickly followed by Bruce's expression turning sour and leaning into his mike, "That's a Sky Cobb original," he announced definitively. Then came Barry's last appearance, introducing "Locomotion", as he entranced the people with his story of how the song's original singer, Little Eva, was Carole King's maid in 1963, and that Carole herself wrote the song. I could sense the "Big fucking deal!" in the thoughts of almost everyone there. They charged through the number in grand style, complimented by the backing vocals of Joanne and Rita, two thirds of the Colonels.

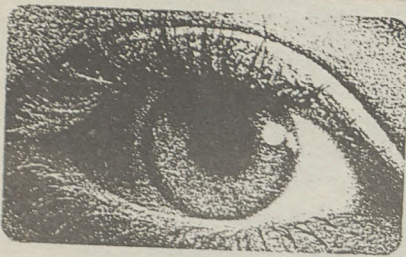
Sky Cobb will continue to play and delight people of the area. But their time will come soon. Things will change and they'll be dealing with big-time promoters and record companies and booking agencies and thieves and liars and the like. It'll all be different, but they'll do it and do it well. Just like everything else.



WOODWIND

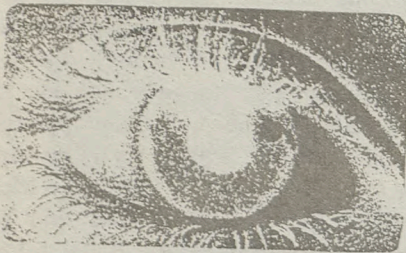
An Arts Paper

Washington, D.C.

free
introductory
copy

"You and I are technology, so superior to any
other alive side of my eye, and my eye has
always had its own light meter—it's got the
whole works... and so I simply say, if you had
that camera, you could take pictures of me and
have it all going and improving itself for the
next seventy years than you have something
approximating the technology you and I really
constitute of... technology's not new... we've just
been a little too crude at it... our ancestry's
got to be here not to let somebody mislead us...
but let our own technology mislead us into
making the wrong moves..."

From the interview with
Deconstructer Putter (page 4)



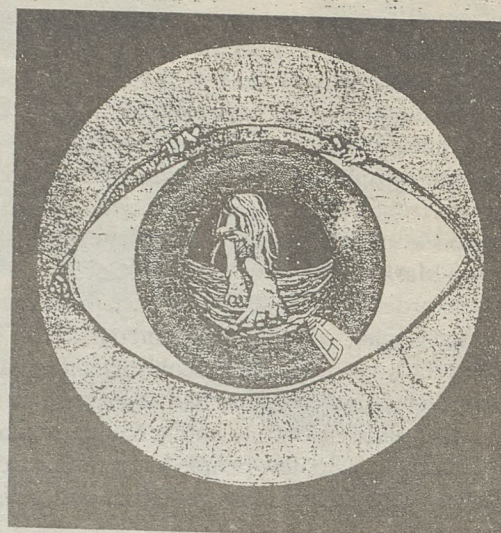
THE CLAIMS ADJUSTER

Ann Darr

Can we call a cricket trapped within
The wall good luck for us?
When it gets real real dark,
When the sun is finished whimpering
On the water
And we are inevitably alone,
There is nothing more hazardous
Than dying, I assure you,
No matter how creditable a job
You do. Or needing someone. Oh
That is bad. Now that is bad.
Even if I win the Yale Series
Someday, I am still going to die.
Let us say it together. DieDieDie.
That would be in your favor, to
Say it with me. I cannot cope.
But there's one thing, I never
Hardly ever, catch colds. Good Stock.

Woodwind
WOODWIND

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ALUMNAE ACCOUNTS

Elisivetta Ritchie

Old school yearbook
faces of paste and cream
chokered with pearls,
sweaters swell
discreetly still,
skirts halve
fat calves
neatly aligned.

Flip, look:

See, here inclined,
no symmetry,
cheeky dreamy
oddity;
me
in borrowed pearls.

MORNING VOW

William Holland

The cold, it begins
with the kind of air
morning offers inside
like a look into an open casket.

Though I could still browse through my dreams,
now scurried off shimmering
like shy, rare fish,
I knew that cold,
knew my nose was chilled like a strawberry,
and that if the covers were ripped off my body
millions of guppies with gobbling lips cold as ice
would rush in like adoring fans
to nudge and kiss my exposed follicles.

I cannot draw myself to write too much
about the alarm clock,
and what happens when it brings the bloody nose
smell of fear down as the first morning command
from, God forgive me, me.

Now my face is awake,
splashed and bled of its oils
in the tiled bathroom.
I feel submission in my cheeks,
as if a cast had been lifted,
leaving me naked to the cold air
and its evil henchman, bright light.

There is still the threat of breakfast,
substances too thick to think
or do anything but gag.
Some victory is won here every morning,
but I shall continue to take no part in it.

ON THE BURLINGTON LINE

With the disappearance of sunlight
all things turn the color of water-at-dusk.
On the East bank of the river the train runs North
through small towns in need of paint,
the pallor of funeral homes in twilight.
At the edges of the burned grass
the river's rippling fingers test the banks
as if questioning their imprisonment,
while on the west horizon
a line of trees stands against the blood-hued sky
stiff like coarse hairs
raised on the spine of the hill.

Woodwind
WOODWIND

AN ARTS PAPER WASHINGTON, D.C. FREE



DID SNOW FALL

did snow fall
while we were asleep
(and melt) and all the seasons,
did they change, and then
it was winter again?
I got up once to close
the windows, and pull
another blanket over us
and you sleep quiet
as snowfall--
I had a shower to get warm
and then a cup of tea
by the window and watched
you sleep--after a while
I crawled back in with you
and fell asleep
against your arm.
did snow fall
while we were asleep
(and melt) and all the seasons,
did they change, and then
it was winter again?

Time-ago girls
unfurled farewells
urging success
disguising dislike
promising memory,
ink uniform blue.

Each one's got
a Favorite Song.

Blow, years, blow.
Dried daisies blow
away, away we go.

Remember those labels?
Remember those dreams?

"Most Studious"
sews crewel now.

"Best Actress" made
Broadway;
they say: was made
frequently.

The class' "Most Poetic"
became an alcoholic.
Always was
hypersensitive.

In last week's obits we read
our "Best Athlete"--
here, with hockey stick--
is dead.

And these--our leading wheels?
We always knew they'd be
backbones of the community.

Me?
I'm just slipped disc
spinning in space,
snatching at stars,
still don't belong
in galaxies;
lost my baby fat,
got cheekbones now,

got no pearls
but still got dreams
and Favorite Songs.

Roots and Branches

By Richard Peabody

I have to thank Richard Harrington and Mike Schreiber for making *Woodwind* into a local institution. If I hadn't stumbled over their baby in the dog days of '69, there might never have been a *Gargoyle* magazine. Our first four issues were tabloid for a reason--*Woodwind* was sorely missed. Sure, *Unicorn Times* was on the scene by 1973 but it never featured poetry, fiction, or graphics. Even *Rolling Stone* ran poetry. It just wasn't "underground" without poetry. And it was precisely that combo of music information, columns and literature that set my imagination soaring and which I sought to duplicate with my own mag in 1976.

Woodwind was the first marketplace for local poets and fictions writers I ever encountered. A proverbial booster shot of sass and enthusiasm. They had a larger circulation than local lit mags like *People in the Streets* (1970), *Buffalo Stamps* (1970-75), *Proteus* (1972-78), *Mass Transit* (1973-74) or *Hoo-Doo* (1973-75), whose distribution outlets made them visible to only a lucky few, and weren't as markedly "ambitious" as local literary giants like *Voyages* (1967-73) or *Dryad* (1967-78). No, this was literature you could shake hands with in the dark (to steal from British lyricist and poet Peter Brown). Some of us couldn't live without it.

And not it's back. Maybe I'm just an old hippie but DC really needs an arts tabloid that supports the local scene--a place where humanity rules over the cruel lampoon. Something that combines the size of the *City Paper* with the hip energy of the *Washington Review*. Something that can channel local talent and send it arcing across the sky. Something like *Woodwind*, which was always more than a calendar of events, or editorial soap box. *Woodwind's* greatest hits helps me hope it will happen again. C'mon you guys, now more than ever.

F-2

Amusements

THE EVENING STAR
Washington, D. C., Wednesday, December 9, 1970

GETTING TO KNOW 'WOODWIND'

An Alternate Culture Paper

By WILLIAM HOLLAND
Star Staff Writer

Richard Harrington, the editor of "Woodwind," tells the story of when he was hawking the first issue of the arts paper on a street corner. Someone passed by and saw the unfamiliar name.

"How much?" the fellow inquired.

"It's free," Harrington replied.

"Right," the fellow said. "C'mon, how much."

The fellow had a point, because usually a newspaper is sold, not given away. Not unless it is a throwaway with a lot of advertising money behind it, and neither is the case with "Woodwind."

Harrington's paper, which will be one year old in February, is, in his words, "positive," an alternate culture paper that seeks to use the arts to help rechannel the bitterness and frustration of the young into the building of alternatives.

"If our emphasis is on the arts, it does not mean that we are mindless of the problems around us," he wrote recently. "Only, we feel that there are different ways, more realistic ways, more humane ways to change things."

Hard Going

He had hard going for awhile last year. "I had no money. I didn't have many ads," he said. So he had to put a price tag on the paper—25 cents. Recently, however, with the help of Mike Schriebman, who serves as business manager, the paper has been pulling in enough advertising to stay free and afloat.

"Store owners and business-

men feel easier talking to him," Harrington said, gesturing at Schriebman's shorter hair.

"They seemed relieved when I explain to them that 'Woodwind' isn't a bombs and bull—paper," Schriebman added.

There are visual similarities to the political underground papers, however. The layout is hardly an art director's dream and the non-justified (ragged

right margin) type detracts from the appearance. But it costs money to remedy these things, and Harrington is hopeful that in time, the appearance will improve.

Where "Woodwind" differs from papers such as "The Quicksilver Times," besides the obvious emphasis on culture and lack of clichéd political rhetoric and do-it-yourself guerilla pieces, is in its approach.

"We're trying to reach an audience, to write something which will open somebody's mind up," Harrington said. "not take a position which will just reinforce someone's preconceptions and fears about (youth directed) change."

Becoming Known

When asked whether he thought most "Quicksilver Times" readers were curious rather than violent radicals, Harrington, who once wrote for that paper before leaving to start "Woodwind," said, "Sure, out of ten people buying it on the street, nine were tourists types or older people."

"Woodwind" is becoming well-known among young people at area colleges and in town for its features, the most inventive of which is a complete calendar ("Well, almost complete") of events of interest to youth—and events Harrington feels could be of interest. Concerts (rock, jazz, folk and classical), gallery shows, museum exhibits, theater and movies.

Its music, art, film and book reviews are almost always interesting, and often focus attention on material the media doesn't cover in its rush for the latest weekly instant masterpiece. A recent issue, for example, carried a book review of "Johnny Got His Gun," a novel written in 1938 that concerns a boy blasted to a vegetable state in World War I, which has just been reissued in paperback.

The paper presently has no real staff, although Harrington can rely on about a dozen writers to contribute pieces each issue.

"We can't pay contributors," he said. "I wish we could get to the point where we can. It's remarkable how good the writing has been, considering we can't offer any money."

"Woodwind" has no office yet. Harrington lays out the paper himself in his basement apartment, and, with the help of community friends who lend him a car or truck, gets the paper to press and then takes the 15,000 or so copies of the issue around to the colleges and youth spots. The papers go fast.

Whither "Woodwind"? "I just want to keep putting out a free paper," Harrington said. "I look at it like a sculpture. You know, its like a sculpture, and I want people to be able to take it home with them, and enjoy it."



'Woodwind': "rechanneling bitterness."

ME: THE METAPHYSICS OF RAIN

Sue Tichey

Being ten or twelve,
I believed in the power of breath:
that Jack breathed frost on the glass,
that Spring's warm breath drove him off,
that winds sighed and whistled.
And the rain terrified me,
and the thunder,
not being blown in birth,
I was told the thunder was empty sound,
but it was knowing I would wake in the night to
the sound of rain.....

At war with the good warm sun and the natural breathing air,
it churned the earth to chaos
and dampened my very bed with its raw chill.

Oh rain
I dance for you.

I grew up with the power of spells,
Mystified by yours,
I am the worshipper at your soggy altar
who holds the undefeated lamp against the dark air.
You who were not defeated and are not still,
give me the strength to slide mountains
if I can move them no other way.
Give me the power of the empty thunder
to flood the valleys with ny tears,
the tears that are rain, that are you,
at whose altar I am humble.

You who liberate none,
who weep your descent from the skies,
you are not like the wind,
nor like frost,
nor spring.
For you are fallen from the sky,
wringing your weeping way heavenward again
by the mercy of the sun.
Grant me the vision
that I, too, may, for but your brief instant
free from the breathing air and burning sun,
possess the sky.

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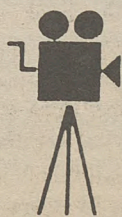
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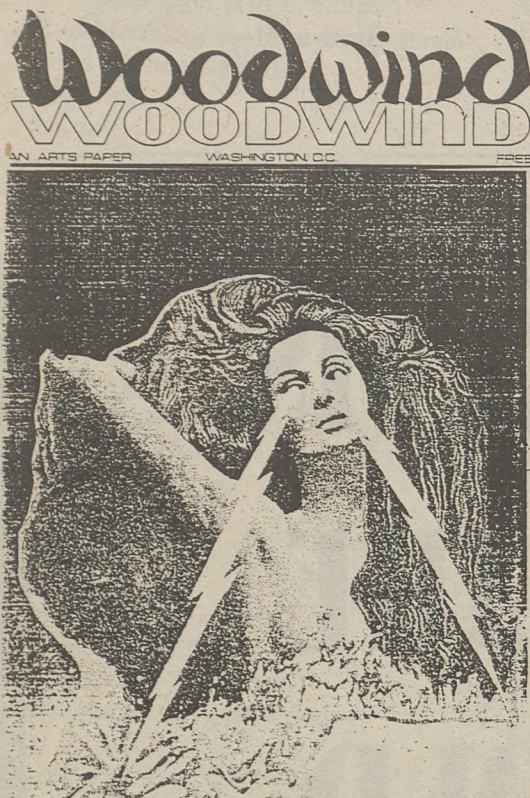


RUNNING OUT OF WATER

Sue Tichey

The coals are carried lightly now,
tossed in a handbag over my shoulder,
They smoulder,
used to fire a smile,
a sob,
juggled from hand to hand in a demolition derby
of springing steps, big nights, and constructive reading,
never left long enough
to burn.
The water of Friday nights
falls steaming from my fingertips.

I am out a lot when you call,
but the door was taken long ago
by the blind and helpless firemen;
and boredom,
years,
and fantasy
steal close when my back is turned,
to blow softly in the door.
Some night now when the moon rises,
a spark,
when it slides into the sky above the jagged road,
ignites;
And it goes roaring past control.
I have used every drop of water I know,
and I have only so far to run.
I've been taught no firedrills.
We all thought the water would do.



Of Cabbages and Kings

'Woodwind' Fills D.C. Cultural Void

Mark Olshaker

PERHAPS THE MOST EXCITING and encouraging development in the arts in the Washington area in the past year is the publishing of the newspaper, "Woodwind." The paper, beginning its second year of publication, attempts to cover all phases of the arts, and the product improves with each bi-weekly issue.

"Woodwind" is actually the "lengthened shadow" of Richard Harrington, a reporter for the "Washington Free Press" who went to work as a film critic for the "Quicksilver Times." Then last year he borrowed several hundred dollars and with the help of a handful of people who shared his commitment that serious treatment of culture in D.C. had been too long ignored, put out the first issue of "Woodwind."

Last year, the paper had a circulation of a few thousand, mostly in Georgetown and on the college campuses and sold for 25 cents. This year Harrington and his assistant Michael Schreiman have decided to distribute the paper free, depending primarily upon contributions, subscriptions and what will be greatly increased advertising revenue now that the circulation is up to 25,000 city-wide.

But Schreiman stresses the point that they will not take advantage of this with an inordinate percentage of

advertising, which they feel would detract from the basic aims of the periodical.

Not only does "Woodwind" cover each aspect of the Washington arts world, but it does so well, which is unusual for a paper with little in the way of professional expertise. The staff is unpaid, each person submitting material as often as he can. Not only does the paper carry critical and academic writing on the subjects of drama, films, music, dance, and books, but previously-unpublished poetry and graphics as well. I will not be at all surprised if it turns out that several Washington artists of the future receive their starts in "Woodwind."

The paper editorially takes no political stand, a decision Harrington made before the first issue. But the writing does not shy away from the obvious and necessary connection between art and politics when it arises. It is encouraging that in a journal devoted exclusively to the arts that the arts should not be treated as an isolated entity but as an integral part of the whole of life.

Aside from the quality of the writing, the layout and photographs are also visibly improved from the early issues, and far superior to the "Quicksilver

Woodwind

AN ARTS PAPER WASHINGTON, D.C. FREE



"HIT IT WITH THE BABY"
(Theatre direction for the Lighting Man)

Grace Cavalieri

Rounding a corner in a open ocean is quite possible. Landmarks, ocean marks keep shifting, but keep coming on. That school of whales has been here, near here before, and your insides leap riding the back of that water-breaking shape, carting his own scenery, his water-fall, with him. The sun careens around the earth at a breath-taking speed to that old hide. Every dawn is a drama played by light, surfacing surprise, streams of color dragged across your eye balls. That dark island which grew in you, which you have spewed up to indent the horizon, now has a golden hummock to show you that it cares. No, to show you light is all that matters after all ("hit it with the baby," and anyone in the theatre could walk that beam and spot-light to the stage,) and this is what we search for, after all, not oceans, islands, not this continual wandering about backstage, banging our heads on the dressing room door but the moment on our inner stage when we have "hit it with the baby" and light blooms.

THE HATCHET, Monday, Oct. 5, 1970-9

TO STRANGERS WHO LOOK LIKE THEY DIE EARLY

Grace Cavalieri

Waiting for breakfast
Waiting for flights
The salesman from
Fayetteville
Took my pleasure
While I studied his
Bones

He had done it
In motels
Sixty-five times
With sixty-four girls
And had an apple tree
In his yard
Which never
Bloomed

You may take my lack
Of pretentiousness
For inconsequence
He seemed to say

I dreamed of going
Swimming
Away
Forgive me
I said
I never could laugh fast
I also play a piano
Slower than one can dance

He had met hills and
Conquered them
Invested
Outwaited his peers
Seen bright lights
In Dayton
While three children
Were back home

Hating me for knowing
His secrets
I surrounded him
Making it almost good
Since I don't like you
Perhaps I should do something
For you

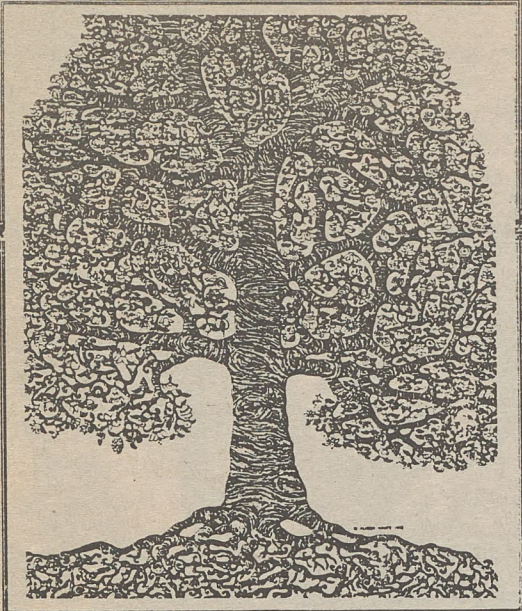
His mind did sixty-five
Into sixty-six
Be frank about this thing
Before the waitress comes
Would you like to hear me sing?

Woodwind

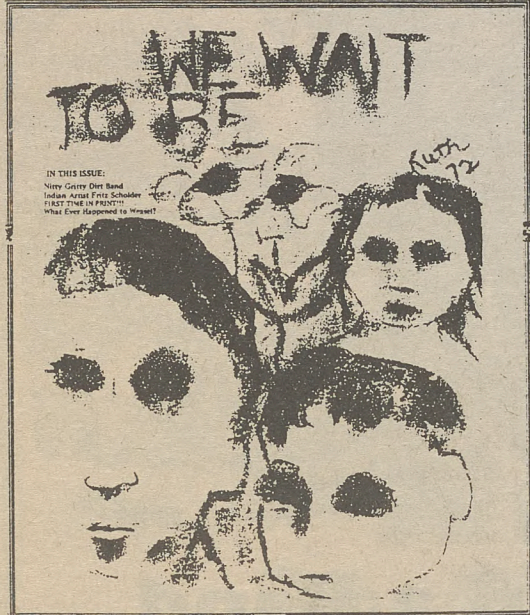
AN ARTS PAPER WASHINGTON, D.C. FREE



Woodwind
AN ARTS PAPER
VOL. IV NO. 5
WASHINGTON, D.C. FREE DECEMBER 5, 1972



Woodwind
AN ARTS PAPER
VOL. IV NO. 7
WASHINGTON, D.C. FREE JANUARY 16, 1973



Woodwind
AN ARTS PAPER
VOL. III NO. 16 MAY 25, 1972
WASHINGTON, D.C. FREE



*Summer was forever,
love unfettered,
Smokestack, El Ropo,
and the music cleansed our souls...*

— G. R. 1991 —

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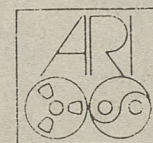
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Sageworth: Evolution of a Band

By Tom Zito

Hearing good music is much like coming across a dew-coated spider web glistening in the early morning sun deep within a forest. It's one of those experiences that happens unexpectedly and unpretentiously, with no way to stop and take a picture of it. It's here and then it's gone, and that's exactly what's so refreshing: It remains not as a picture in a photo-album or a story in a book, but as a living part of the person who experienced it in one unique moment of revelation. The future life and continued existence of that moment are derived completely from the vitality of the beholder.

The life of the artist is always a matter of sharing these magical moments with his audience, and the task probably reaches its ultimate height in realms musical. Unlike the film maker or novelist, the musician is not free to paste together strips of celluloid or scattered paragraphs deep within the confines of his studio, releasing a final product only when he feels his work has jelled into some organic unity. The musician is put on the spot when he performs, and has to deliver the goods forthright.

Perhaps this problem reaches its pinnacle in rock and jazz musicians who are not at all known by the public. Where can they go to present their music?

Club owners say that the increasing use of marijuana is hurting business. They say people often prefer to stay home, get stoned and listen to records than come to clubs and drink. The tightening of the economy has also reduced the size of audiences.

Thus it becomes harder and harder for young musicians to find an open stage for their music. Many find the only outlet is to record, usually prematurely, since they have had little direct, physical give and take between themselves and an audience. And rarely will an artist achieve a hearing only through the plastic that his discs are pressed upon. Rock is visual as well as auditory. Didn't most of us buy "Meet The Beatles" only after we had seen them on Ed Sullivan?

Washington has many local groups playing in bars and clubs around town. But almost all of them are cranking out note-for-note imitations of the same "Top 40" schlock-rock that can be heard on jukeboxes and AM radios. Two of them--Grin and Crank--attempt original material that is modeled after some of the heavier rock groups in underground circles. One musician--Claude Jones--is fairly well known, while still another remains sadly unheard and overlooked--Sageworth and Drums.

To take a close look at the growing pains and problems of Sageworth is to discover many of the obstacles that interfere with the development of most rock bands that are trying to make it in the world of entertainment. As is the case with many decent bands, Sageworth has a genealogy whose length rivals the line of Abraham. Its roots go back almost 10 years, a long time when you realize that most of the group's members are just about twice that age.

Once upon a time were the Moondogs, a hack rock 'n roll band that eventually evolved into the Malibooz, a high school group influenced by the Beach Boys that performed mostly other people's surfer music, with a few original pieces on the side, including "Goin' to Malibu," an offspring of Walter Lindsay Egan and John Zambetti. When Egan and Zambetti left New York to peruse college educations, they found themselves and their former drummer, Tom Scarp, together in Washington. They put up a few cardboard "help-wanted" signs and came up with an organist, Frank Peters, and a bass player, Ralph Dammann, who had worked with some black soul bands in Charlottesville, VA.

For almost all of 1967 the Malibooz, in their new, improved Washington version, worked the college mixer route, cranking out the usual "Top 40" schlock. They fitted two original numbers into their repertoire, but after about a year ran into an

inevitable confrontation: are you going to be a student or a musician? The Malibooz couldn't get it together, went their separate ways, and almost choked.

The band later regrouped and enjoyed a short coda when singer, Ann Marie McLoone, joined the ranks.

The new group needed a new name, so Egan dipped back into the original Malibooz's bag of lyrics and came up with a line from bass-player Dennis Lopez's "The Inland Printer." "And from the inland printer comes a dilemma of sageworth and drums." But a new name does not always a new life birth, and the resurrection of the Malibooz in the form of Sageworth and Drums was brief. The second parting found Egan making tapes of his own by double-tracking on a little Sony recorder. Scarp got out of music and into marriage. Dammann and Peters joined a soul band, Abraham and The Cobras. Zambetti studied his biology. And McLoone went off to sample stout in the pubs of merrie Ireland.

After a while, any musician inevitably becomes a little frustrated making music to a tape recorder. In March of 1969, Egan found a new drummer, Matt Sheppard. He added P. B. Chowka on vocals and an amplified Martin D-18 acoustic guitar, and Tom Guider on bass. The new band was the first group to play at Emergency, a Georgetown club, but soon other emergencies arose within the band, leading to a third parting of the ways.

Fall of 1969 found Spiro Agnew a household word, Ann Marie McLoone back from Ireland, and Abraham and The Cobras disbanded. Fate certainly has her strange ways, and in December the all new, though slightly familiar, Sageworth and Drums, appeared once again at Emergency, with Egan on guitars and vocals, Sheppard on drums, Dammann on bass, and McLoone doing the lead vocals. The group wanted to add a fifth member who would double on vocals and rhythm guitar, but there was no one at the inn. Thus add two--Jack Burkhardt on vocals, and guitarist John Borger, who had been playing at a coffee house called the Ontario Place--and come up with a six-person Sageworth and Drums.

Egan, as the only real witness of the entire ontology of the band is really its leader. He writes most of the group's completely original repertoire, and his music displays an excellent familiarity with all areas of rock (for several years he worked as a disc jockey on radio station WGTB-FM in Washington).

But perhaps what makes the music of Sageworth and Drums so varied and all-encompassing are the different interests that each of the musicians brings to the band. Dammann--whose bass playing has been compared to that of such giants as Jack Casady and Paul McCartney--has a broad background in soul and blues (in addition to rock), and also plays classical string bass. Borger is a fine classical guitarist in his own right. Sheppard was influenced largely by swing-band jazz, and McLoone not only played folk music extensively, but was also very interested in ethnic dance music, especially polkas. As a result, the elements that combine to form the band reflect a great deal of musical traditions that are rarely found in rock today.

Until this year, the group was plagued with several types of indecision: were the members really going to commit themselves to the band and its music? Was the group going to play the kind of music they wanted to play, or simply crank out "Top 40" crowd-pleasers? Basically the whole question became one of deciding whether being Sageworth and Drums was a job or a life. Fortunately, life emerged triumphant.

Sageworth has come a long way since first opening at Emergency two years ago. The musical and individual growth of the band and its members have come about largely at the expense of mass popularity. The band struggles to continue, often finding jobs and money in short supply. But within the house on Wisconsin Avenue where they live and work lies a glistening web of beauty seen by only a few.

Seems the world has lost its mind

Trying desperately to rhyme

All the things it cannot know

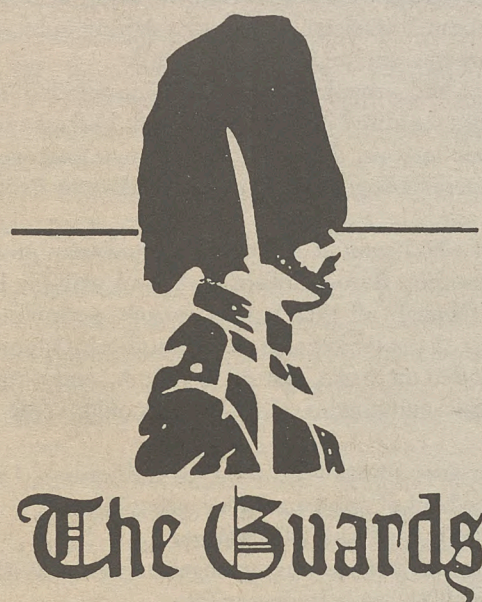
But our love still seems to

Go on just the same

--forever

c 1970 by Walter Lindsay Egan

Photo by Ken Fell / Washington Post /
Reprinted from Washington Post, August 19, 1970



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Is Itchy Brother the Great American Plastic Ukelele Dream Come True?

By Donia Mills

"Hey," the drummer said to the club manager with a funny little smile, "you got a spare snare drum around here by any chance? I just broke a head." (His own head remaining remarkably together considering air time was less than ten minutes away...) The scene aptly enough, was Emergency--Georgetown's lovable cross between a warehouse and a conversation pit--and the event was an historical one: Washington's first live broadcast of a rock concert, in quadrophonic sound. The band was Itchy Brother (to be followed by the headliner Exuma), and the only thing better than listening to it on WHFS was being there in the flesh.

With the drum head quickly replaced, the familiar honey-smooth voice of d.j. "Cerphe" announced the occasion and Itchy Brother promptly kicked off with a solid wall of music that no doubt astounded anyone in the audience who was hearing them, as I was, for the first time. Itchy WHO? was my first reaction. How could anyone so relatively obscure be so utterly good?

Phil Blum manages to play a beautiful lead guitar, sing some gut-ripping vocals, and hold the group together without ever seeming to dominate the stage. Mike Nash plays a very fluid saxophone (after only 2 1/2 years on the instrument), trading off solos with Andy Ottinger, who is no slouch either. The fine work of pianist Guy Dorsey and Ace "the Bass" Hansmann does more than merely fill in the chinks; it weaves together the smooth, full-bodied flavor that is characteristic of Itchy Brother's sound.

As for John "Zero" Patterson, add perseverance to his list of other good qualities: when the substitute drum head (made in Japan) split during the first number, he just turned it over and played the other side. "And that," he said later with typical equanimity, "was a drag."

I doubt if anybody else noticed, however, and Itchy Brother's overall performance that Sunday night was anything but a drag. Cerphe summed up his opinion

very simply: "They're good! Their sense of timing and change is really nice. Each man is competent on his own, yet they play well together too. I really like them."

Emergency manager Mike Schreiber claims that he chose Itchy Brother for the broadcast honors because "They're one of the most underrated groups in town. I want to see them make it."

I suspect that Itchy Brother would be pretty happy to see themselves make it, too. They've been at it a long time, counting their separate musical histories, which go back beyond the 15 months they've been playing together. Their original motives may have been varied, but the end result is the same: they all want to be professional musicians, both now and in the future. There isn't anything else they'd rather do.

For Guy, the lightning bolt struck during the mid-60's Beatles revolution. He decided at age 15 that he just had to be a rock and roll star -- so he went out and bought a "cheesy plastic organ" for \$25.

"I was a rock and roll star immediately," he confesses with modesty befitting a Virgo. "I didn't know any chords or anything but see, on this organ you could push a button and it would automatically play the whole chord." He never learned to read music, despite a year of piano lessons in the second grade, but learned to pick out melodies by ear listening to records and other musicians. Former groups he played with included the Nightcaps and the Northside Blues Band (long before the current blues revival) as well as the Vagrants, a local Battle-of-the-Bands winner a few years back.

Bassist Ace Hansmann, fired with Arian determination, also began to play at age 15, without the benefit of formal lessons. He is a veteran of such local groups as Desdemona, Middle Earth (in 1967, along with Phil) and Stillroven (in 69-70, along with Zero). He is also Itchy Brother's newest member, having replaced their original bassist last summer.

For some of the others in the group, school bands provided the musical training ground. "Sooner or later in elementary school," says Randy Ottinger "some funny-looking little man comes into your classroom and says, 'okay now, we want to give everybody a chance to play a musical instrument, so who wants to play what?'" At the age of ten Randy had already decided on the trumpet, since his father and grandfather had both had stints as professional trumpet players.

All his years of lessons and practice paid off in 1968, when he landed a job with a Michigan-based road band named The Power and the Glory. "I'll tell you, that teaches you a lot about a musician's life fast -- driving in blizzards at 2 a.m. in the midwest, to get from one one-nighter to the next."

As the practical and organized and discipline-minded Taurus of the group, Ottinger has his eggs scattered in several different baskets -- clerking at the Pants Pub, teaching music lessons, doing some freelance photography, and attending classes at Montgomery College. But his playing with Itchy Brother, he insists, heads the list.

Zero is another who began in school bands, and went on to play drums in one local group after another. Before Stillroven, he was with the Resumes from 67-69, hanging in there through all that band's various permutations. Like Ottinger, Patterson has also seen the darker side of the music life. "I thought I'd try California for a while, but I ended up broke, and stuck in L. A., and it was a pretty bad scene. All these speed freaks and junkies. As soon as I could, I split and came back to D. C."

"Why does everyone always want to go to California?" I asked innocently. "Is California really the land of opportunity for a musician?"

"No," quoth Leo, "but it's sure a lot warmer."

Mike Nash, at age 18, is the group's youngest member. With Aquarian abandon, he quit school in the 10th grade to devote full

time to playing the saxophone. Currently he is traveling to New York City three times monthly for lessons. "And then I picked up the flute about eight months ago," he says casually -- a fact the Emergency crowd bore happy witness to during the broadcast performance that Sunday night.

Which brings us to Phil Blum, Itchy Brother's leader and senior citizen, a classic Libra who seems to have packed an awful lot of living and feeling and music-making into his 23 years.

"From the time I was eight I was singing solo bits, in talent shows. In French." (He's a French citizen.) At ten, he was a sort of junior spokesman for the Montgomery County Little Singers, a group he performed with for several years. About this time he says, his parents bought him a plastic ukelele, a move they would live to regret -- because from then on it was nothing but the Great American Plastic Ukelele Dream. "I went through the whole bit, you know, learning all the songs on the radio by ear, playing them on my plastic ukelele. My half-brother was singing rhythm and blues up in New York, and he turned me on to all the great R & B sounds that were big back then -- groups like the Heartbeats, the Coasters. I developed a feeling for blues really early."

He also developed an unquenchable desire for electric guitar, which his parents staunchly resisted -- an adversity their son obviously thrived upon. "When I was 12 I had to borrow an electric guitar so I could play with this band I was in at the time. When I was 13 the folks finally broke down and got me an old junky acoustic guitar, and when I was 15 they decided to let me take classical guitar lessons, which lasted about five weeks. I didn't have an electric guitar of my own until I was 17, and even then I had to buy it myself against my parents' wishes -- saving up my lunch money, scrounging money from my friends, my enemies, anybody -- to get together \$25 for that guitar."

Even the 11 summers he spent camping and counseling at Camp Letts, under the wholesome auspices of the YMCA, contributed to his musical debauchery. "We spent all our spare time lying around listening to old blues on the local black station up there, and then copying it ourselves -- people like B. B. King, when nobody had ever heard of B.B. King." Camp Letts was also where he first met Ace and Zero and Guy. ("Naturally, we were the most notorious guys there," Guy puts in. "We noticed each other right away.")

Their separate musical paths finally converged last fall, when they began jamming together, and their first professional gig together (as a four-man group, with the original bassist) was on December 1st of last year, at the Saint Alban's coffeehouse.

"We were terrible," they all admit freely and cheerfully.

That first night they didn't even have a name. They had already rejected such possibilities as "Mox-Nix" and "Richard and the Sphere" and others they assure me are too bawdy even for *Woodwind* to print. Finally with Saint Alban's M. C. pressing them for a name, they conjured up a memory from their old degenerate days sitting around watching cartoons on TV.

"This show was called King Leonardo," Guy reminisces, "and there was one character named Biggy Rat who looked just like Zero, and then there was O. D. Cologne, and of course Itchy Brother was the bad guy. We figured we could always change our name to something else after the gig, but we sort of liked it once we got used to it."

In their earliest days, the group relied a lot on blues standards, but when Nash began playing with them around March and they added Ottinger in May, they rewrote a lot of the music and underwent a rapid transition from rock and roll to a fuller, more jazz-oriented sound."

Another important change has been the gradual addition of more original songs to their repertoire. Phil does most of the song writing, with occasional ideas from the others.

"There are really two different ways I write songs," he explains. "Sometimes I'm driving along and suddenly I'll think of a whole song all at once, lyrics and melody and everything, all arranged. Pure emotion. Other times I really have to work at it, start with a certain lick and then work out chord progressions, then melody, and finally lyrics."

Their first song as a group was "The Long Song", which they closed out their WHFS set with, a rambling conglomerate that's sort of a 20-minute musical smorgasbord -- very rich, very tasty. Basically they like to play funky songs that people can dance to -- "When the audience gets off, that's when we really get off." Although so far they've had only mixed success in achieving this aim. Besides their coffeehouse gigs, they've done some shows at Emergency and some outdoor concerts at P Street Beach and Fort Reno -- but they've also played more than their share of "really lowdown gigs" at various redneck bars around town, which didn't seem to do a whole lot for either them or the juicers.

Then there was the time they had the ill fortune to play at RFK Stadium before the Senators next-to-last home game -- an occasion which did not exactly bring the fans out in droves. "They put us on this tractor-drawn platform and wheeled us out to the middle of the infield and plugged us in," Randy recalls. "It was insane." Another job they would especially like to forget was the \$400 gig they were supposed to do at Prince George's Community College. Phil was even driving all the way home from California for the job, except his car blew up in the middle of the Mojave Desert and took two days to fix. They managed to make it anyway, by driving straight through, but arrived at the college a couple hours late to find that another group had been moved into their time slot. After they'd waited around a mere eight hours to play their set, the organizers told them to go on home and don't worry about it. They would be paid anyway (but later boys, later) since they did at least come and hang around all that time. (Needless to say, later -- and the money -- never came.)

"Not to mention the fact that we had three mikes stolen that night," Zero adds sweetly.

No, the ones Itchy Brother prefers to remember are the concert they did with Sageworth at Gaston Hall last February, and, most of all, their regular Tuesday and Sunday-night stints at the Apple Pie, just up the street from Emergency. With the Apple Pie crowd they feel they really have a loyal following -- "they dance and clap and scream and have a great time, and they tell us they're going to come back and hear us again next week." Although it's pretty much limited to the over-20's group, Itchy Brother's music definitely seems to appeal to older people, being a bit too jazzy or sophisticated or something to hit the bubble gum set where they really live. And this can be a problem, with rock audiences getting younger all the time.

"Washington is a very tough town to try and get a start in,"

Mike claims, which seems to be the unanimous lament of local musicians. "There just aren't that many good places you can play."

"And it's always hard to get people to accept good, original music," Zero points out. "They'd rather listen to inferior rehashes of top-40 type tunes they can recognize and hum along with." So, in order to keep those dollars and cents rolling in, club owners and promoters will often pass up more serious, original groups to hire the kind of second-rate stuff that will keep the customers satisfied.

Well this is nothing new either -- the spectre of the crass and philistine businessman controlling an artistic medium he has no real appreciation of or interest in, other than making money. Film-makers and playwrights and artists and writers complain about the same thing. That just seems to be one of the facts of showbiz life

- how good you are doesn't necessarily determine how successful you'll be. (Witness such extreme examples as Roy Buchanan and Grand Funk Railroad...)

Look at it this way: the guys could always go back to selling mod clothes and washing Toyotas, if it were security they wanted. Phil could always go back to being a printer, the trade he was trained for, if a 9-to-5 job was what he wanted.

But that's not what they want either.

Ultimately, they all agree, the ideal would be to become so proficient and versatile on your particular instrument that you could afford to operate independently, into and out of whatever musical projects happened to appeal to you at any given time. (Ah, the freedom of being a Bobby Keys or a Ry Cooder...or even a Nils Lofgren.)

But for the time being, Itchy Brother will settle for some decent-paying jobs, so they can afford to buy some equipment (they still have to borrow amplifiers and PAs for all their gigs) and maybe get into the concert circuit, and eventually into a recording studio.

"Rock today is heading toward jazz, no doubt about it," Phil maintains. And that fact, plus the recent demise of Claude Jones and the departure of Sageworth and the apotheosis of Grin puts Itchy Brother in a pretty good jockeying position among Washington bands for all that new room at the top.

Things may be looking up for the D. C. rock community on other fronts as well. Emergency, for instance, is currently rejuvenating its image with a surge of new national and international bands as well as top local talent.

And, Cerphe says (getting back to that live broadcast), WHFS will probably be doing a lot more live shows since the Itchy Brother/Exuma program was such a success. "I think it's a good thing for radio to get into this sort of community thing," (Like, a people's radio station carrying a broadcast from a people's club of a people's band.) "I'll tell you, it's taken D.C. a long time to come this far."

It's quite a distance Itchy Brother has come, too, since that December night they first played at Saint Alban's. And they are all soberly (and sometimes not so soberly) aware of the distance they still have to go.

Phil, his Libran mind forever weighing both sides of the picture, says there's always that depressing possibility that by the time recognition comes for a band, its style will be passe. The trick, it seems, is to sustain enough drive and enthusiasm to keep on trucking in spite of the occupational hazards that inevitably beset a rock band -- the tedium of playing the same songs night after night, the hassles with equipment and transportation and money, the personality conflicts that arise.

"You've got to realize," Zero reminds me, "that the more dynamic and creative something is, the quicker it can go stale on you. More bands break up because of simple stagnation than any other reason. That's why changes in one form or another -- change of personnel, versatility in styles, constant renewal of material is such a big factor in the success of long-standing groups like Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead.

One of Phil's early compositions, "Song for Musicians," sums up one of the hazards that bothers Itchy Brother the most -- the frustration of trying to make music for an unappreciative audience. "The lyrics talk about how sometimes you play your ass off, and when you've finally finished this dynamite tune you look out there and there's no response, absolutely nothing, all you get is the tinkling of ice in glasses."

But Zero lightens it up a little with a Leonine, if ironic, smile, "Unfortunately, that song was written in six-eight time, and nobody can dance to it. So we don't play that one much anymore."



Special Thanks to the following people who helped bring the past to life

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			Michael Oberman	Weasel
			Tim Pace	Lois Weaver
			Thom Rude	Eve Zibart
			Mike Schreiber	

Emergency

Discotheque has parking hang-up

By SIDNEY LIPPMAN

When is a discotheque a restaurant and when is it a public hall?

On the answer to that question — to be decided by the city's Board of Zoning Adjustment — rides the fate of Emergency, Inc., a spot for teen-agers at 2813 M-st. n.w. in Georgetown.

The Georgetown Citizens Association, which doesn't want the parking problems it foresees with the Emergency's young patrons, contends that the city's zoning administrator incorrectly gave the discotheque an occupancy permit for a restaurant and record shop.

PUBLIC HALL

Georgetown residents told the BZA at a hearing yesterday that administrator Warren Stewart should have issued an occupancy permit for a public hall at Emergency.

The public hall designation carries with it the requirement for off-street parking, something that Emergency, Inc., doesn't have space to provide.

"It (Emergency) would do serious damage to property owners in the area," contended one Georgetown resident. "Our property would decrease in value."

STAND UP

A lawyer for the Georgetown residents said Emergency is a public hall because patrons do not sit at tables but stand or dance. Food is only served at a bar, he said.

John H. Quinn Jr., representing the youthful owners of Emergency, said the spot was "primarily a restaurant" and a record shop, "neither of



By Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post

Daniel Delano works on teen-age club construction.

which uses more than 2,000 square feet of floor area" so no off-street parking was required.

Two teen-age Georgetown brothers, Daniel and Peter Delano, came up with the idea for Emergency last Novem-

ber. With the financial help of parents and other friends a corporation was formed and the discotheque opened last August. No alcoholic beverages are served at Emergency, Inc.

Setback for 'Emergency'

By Richard Prince

Georgetown's Emergency Discotheque was handed an expensive setback by city zoning officials yesterday. They ruled the club must provide from 18 to 26 off-street parking spaces for its customers, an expensive proposition, manager Mike Schreibleman said yesterday. The ruling stemmed from a protest lodged with the Board of Zoning Adjustment by the Citizens Association of Georgetown, which claimed that Emergency's customers were adding to Georgetown's parking problems.

They wanted the board to overturn the city zoning administrator's designation of Emergency, a non-alcohol teen-ager's club, as a "restaurant" and call it instead a "public hall." The difference is that a restaurant doesn't have to provide the extra

parking but a public hall does.

The board yesterday sided partly with the Citizens Association. They said that Emergency requires three licenses, one as a record shop, (which 800 feet of it is) one as a restaurant (which 1,800 feet of it is), and one as a public hall (which is the bone of contention).

The Citizens Association argued that because Emergency charges a low minimum charge (\$2) it is trying to attract large numbers of people. Thus, it is a "public hall."

They claim that the last occupant of this site, The Roundtable Restaurant, was both a public hall and a restaurant and its owners had to provide the extra parking.

"I just don't understand the rationale," said Emergency's lawyer John H. Quinn Jr. "If we have to provide parking, then every other Georgetown establishment will have to provide it."

If we are a public hall, so are the others."

Georgetown's three movie houses have the "public hall" designation, he said, but not other restaurants.

Schreibleman said he was "sure we're not going to close up," but he would have to negotiate with neighborhood parking lots to lease some of their spaces. This can be expensive, he said, because the spaces have to be nearby and he would have to rent the spaces on a long term basis to comply with the law.

Schreibleman said the Citizens Association agreed to help him find parking spaces. But after the hearing last week, Mrs. Harold B. Hinton, association president, said, "I've tried to help them all summer. What they do now is up to them."

The record shop-restaurant, which serves sandwiches, cokes, and potato chips, has given benefits for Runaway House, a haven here for runaway youths, and for the Inner City pro-

gram of the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Its efforts have been supported by Sen. Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) and Rep. William F. Ryan (D-N.Y.) and local Democratic leaders: Channing E. Phillips and Bruce J. Terris.

The youth-operated discotheque opened last month at 2813 M St., NW only after bouts with zoning and licensing officials and the Citizens Association.

Quinn said the next legal step will be to determine if there are grounds for appeal. Then it could go for a retrial before the zoning board, or to court, or Emergency could just attempt to comply with the ruling.

By Sally Quinn

It's a real Emergency.

The youngsters who have banded together to form the Emergency discotheque in Georgetown tried to give a benefit party last night, but they ended up twice thwarted. Once by the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections, and once by the police.

When it was over, parents, children and friends stood on the sidewalk outside 2813 M St. n.w., angry at what Bill Treanor, director of Runaway House, called "hypocritical, unresponsive bureaucracy."

Only the band and some of the young workers were allowed inside. They served sandwiches and soft drinks to the milling group that totaled about 250 people during the evening.

The benefit was to have been for Runaway House, a District house for runaway

Teen-Age Struggle

By Myra MacPherson

There were half a dozen teenage boys working in this place in Georgetown—sawing, lugging wood, hammering, mixing mortar for bricks. Everyone in sight had long hair—some wore it almost shoulder length—except for one young man, standing on a ladder. He had a brush cut. He was an electrician and the only paid worker in the place.

The teen-agers had hired him, for they are part of a youth corporation—most are 17 and 18, one is 21 and the oldest is 28—now working day and night to get Georgetown's first record shop-restaurant-discotheque ready to open by mid-July. They plan to give a private benefit party there tonight to aid the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Inner City Program and Runaway House, a District haven for runaway youths.

However, so many legal setbacks—pushed by some Georgetown citizens opposed to the spot—have cropped up that they may not be able to open their doors.

See EMERGENCY, B10, Col. 4

EMERGENCY, From B1

The place, 2813 M St. n.w., is called Emergency because the corporation feels that such a non-alcoholic spot where teen-agers can hear live music is desperately needed.

Daniel Delano, 17, one of the corporation members, who has played in rock bands and has had trouble finding good places to play, said, "There's no place where kids under 18 can go."

When Delano, his younger brother, Peter, and a group of friends got the idea last November for a place to buy records, soft drinks and to hear rock bands, they had no thought of financial and legal problems, or of just plain citizen opposition.

One protesting member of the Georgetown Citizens Association said, "We don't need any more places to help turn Georgetown into a hippie slum."

After the boys rented the building, vacant for two years, for \$850 a month, they went to the District zoning authorities and asked if there were any problems about running their proposed Emergency.

The boys said no objections were raised at that time. Their lawyer, John Quinn, said, "The original clearance turned out not to be an effective one."

Because of legal entanglements regarding the right of way of an adjacent alley, the corporation has not yet been issued a certificate of occupancy by the Department of Licenses and Inspections.

Quinn said the Georgetown Citizens Association heard about tonight's party and lodged a formal complaint. Their argument is whether the corporation can hold a benefit party before the issuance of a certificate of occupancy. Quinn argues that it is a private party for the benefit of two charitable institutions.

Quinn is meeting today with the investigation division of the Licenses and Inspections Department.

The Rev. James Fenhagen, of Georgetown's St. John's Episcopal Church, said he thinks it "most unfortunate" some adults want to thwart the venture. Mr. Fenhagen, who counsels lots of youths on drugs, said the Emer-

gency project was "like breath of fresh air."

Mrs. William Delano, Daniel and Peter's mother, said, "There kids have invested their own money. Daniel teaches guitar, another by teaches at a summer school. It's practically all their own labor. They're soundproofing the back of the building and they've talked to neighbors behind them who said if they did that they wouldn't object."

Daniel said, "We started bunch of friends who wanted a record store and rock music place. First we had to become a corporation. We asked our parent for money, and out of the eight, only two sets of parents invested. We put in our own money, but we needed a lot more."

Daniel's father, former general counsel for the Peace Corps and president of a consulting firm that works on model cities and poverty programs, became "our official fund raiser—he sought out investors." With total candor, Daniel added the investors were people who "could afford to lose money—there's always a risk of something going wrong."

In the past three months there have been various zoning difficulties, and the boys studied District codes, made a survey map of the property, talked things over with zoning authorities and eventually got on good terms with them.

Meanwhile, the fate of Emergency is uncertain. Quinn, who said the District authorities admit there has been pressure from the Georgetown Citizens Association to halt the project, feels that everything now hinges on the alley right of way.

"For many years it was used as a public alley. There was a night spot in there where the Emergency is and they used it. However, it is still recorded in the name of the adjacent property owner, who died recently. The most simple solution is for the executrix of the property to sign an easement granting the right of way. She has so far declined to cooperate. We may have to take it to court to declare it a public alley, which is technically is after these 20 years."



The Emergency And the Blues

By JOHN SEGRAVES

The Emergency has made it, temporarily at least, and with a little more luck than it had getting off the ground, it will stay where it is and the kids will have a place to go to meet their friends and soak up the blues-oriented rock music.

In case you haven't been paying attention to the local news columns recently, the Emergency is the teen-age (or thereabout) discotheque at 2813 M St. NW, which spent weeks battling with the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the Georgetown Citizens Association (which ironically is its next-door neighbor) and the Board of Licenses and Inspections in order to open.

Emergency, which was a week old Wednesday, is a far cry from the crummy Ambassador Theater which a young group took over a couple of years ago and turned into a disco.

It is a long, dark, narrow room with a soft-drink and sandwich bar along the right-hand side leading up to a stage. The latter is big enough to give a five-piece band plenty of elbow room and still allow for a light show behind it. The foyer-like entrance has a pretty, clean, deep-piled blue rug on its floor and photographs adorn the walls.

Perhaps 25 or 30 portable chairs (formerly the property of the Georgetown Theater) are available. Some kids either stand along the walls drinking soft drinks or coffee or chomping on such things as peanut butter and chutney sandwiches or sitting on the rug-covered floors in the small balcony.

They are quiet, orderly and obviously happy to have their own place and their own music.

The two bands currently sharing the stage also are far superior to anything ever booked into the Ambassador, which had a short life in that dreary atmosphere of 18th Street and Columbia Road. The first to appear each night is the Northside Blues Band, a five-man group of four youngsters from Chevy Chase, Md., and one from the District. The leader is a handsome 17-year-old singer-harmonica player named Bret Littlehales who has become a student of the blues and will be Cornell-bound next month. The bassist is a Princeton student named Bill Bowman while Van Holmead handles the percussion work. Guy Dorsey is on organ and Rob Ewan on lead guitar.

They don't come to bend one's mind or ears with electronic gimmickry or crashing cacophony. Their almost constant blues is played with taste and intelligence. It is a highly cohesive unit for a group whose oldest member is 19 and is playing its first professional date.

The other is called simply Claude Jones, five more experienced young blues-rockers who also are several cuts above the norm, especially for five local kids. Together the two groups make for a splendid, relaxed evening in a setting that no parent should be worried about.

It certainly is not plush, but then kids don't want a plushy spot, either. They want a place where they can relax, dress as they care to and enjoy themselves. All they should be asked is to do their thing with propriety, which they certainly were doing the other night. Their conduct, in fact, was a lot more exemplary than I have found from time to time in some of the more adult clubs around town.

in the Parks program to use P Street Beach for the affair. About 50 people shuttled by car from M street, to the beach, where they briefly listened to a rock band called The Which. But at 10:25 p.m. Park Police, citing complaints, ordered the gathering to end.

It did, without incident, but back outside the Emergency, the guests were angry.

They included J. Carter Brown, the new director of the National Gallery, Mr. and Mrs. Bardyl Tirana and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sitton.

Those listening to the music of the Sageworth and Drum group coming from inside the building agreed with James Harithas, director of the Corcoran Gallery, who said:

"I'm deeply, deeply disturbed. This is outrageous."

'Emergency' Contesting Parking Rule

The Emergency, Inc., was back before the Board of Zoning Adjustment yesterday, this time to declare that it does not have to provide off-street parking for its clients.

The youth-operated, youth-oriented record store-restaurant at 2813 M St. NW opened its doors Aug. 6.

It has been before the board several times since asking for an occupancy permit earlier this year.

At yesterday's hearing, an attorney for the Georgetown Citizens Association contended the Emergency is a public hall, rather than a restaurant. He said it should be required to provide off-street under those circumstances.

The Emergency was awarded a certificate of occupancy by a zoning administrator Aug. 4. The citizens association is contesting the action.

The Emergency's attorney, John H. Quinn Jr., said the establishment was correctly awarded an occupancy permit as a record store-restaurant and should not be required to provide parking.

Quinn said that unusually stringent attempts by the District government had been made to insure that the Emergency had complied with every applicable law and regulation since it applied for permission to open.

Quinn contended that few restaurants in Georgetown provide parking for customers, though none that operates solely as a restaurant has to. He said establishments that do provide parking have permits both as restaurants and public halls. The Emergency, he contends, is not a public hall.

The board is expected to reach a decision at its next executive meeting.

Emergency Is Over

By Tom Zito

On Saturday night after almost 2½ years of ups and downs Emergency, the non-alcoholic M Street club designed to bring rock music to teen-agers, closed its doors.

Most of the get-things-done members of Washington's hip community felt it was indeed the end of the gathering place that had on several previous occasions temporarily closed its doors.

"This is definitely the end," said Mike Schreiber, a sometime concert promoter who had tried to bail the club out. "The rent is \$900 a month and there's no way to hold out long enough to get the kind of acts that could make ends meet."

"I really don't think there'll be an Emergency anymore," said Richard Harrington, founder of Woodwind, D.C.'s free arts newspaper.

"It would take too much money to fix the place up the way it should be," Harrington said. "On top of that, you'd have to change the name. Nobody'll come to this place, with the image it has. You'd have to change it radically—bring in other things besides rock music, like poetry and dance."

The club had been plagued from the outset by hassles with the zoning board and the Citizens Association of Georgetown. But by the time most of the legal problems had been alleviated, Emergency's image had degenerated into that of being merely a hangout for teenyboppers.

"You can try all you want to change an image," said Schreiber. "But once people are convinced that the place is for boppers only and not somewhere you can hear good music, it gets impossible. It got to the point where it was embarrassing for groups to play here. It was a real down for them."

Schreiber decided to call it quits. He brought in local group Claude Jones, also disbanding after the engagement, for the final week. Claude Jones played three sets at a New Year's Eve party at the club and on Saturday local band Crank closed Emergency with an ear-splitting level of sound.

Emergency's Emergency

Something is happening in Washington that will be instructive to any adult who might not yet understand why young people are so turned off to, and dropped out from, the "Establishment."

There is a rock club in Georgetown called The Emergency. The club is non-alcoholic, features a low admission price, and as such attracts a clientele of youngsters roughly 14 years of age and up. The club is managed by a bunch of kids in their late teens and early twenties, who put in long hours with no pay, because the place is always on the brink of disaster—band prices, rent and other operational costs versus the low admission.

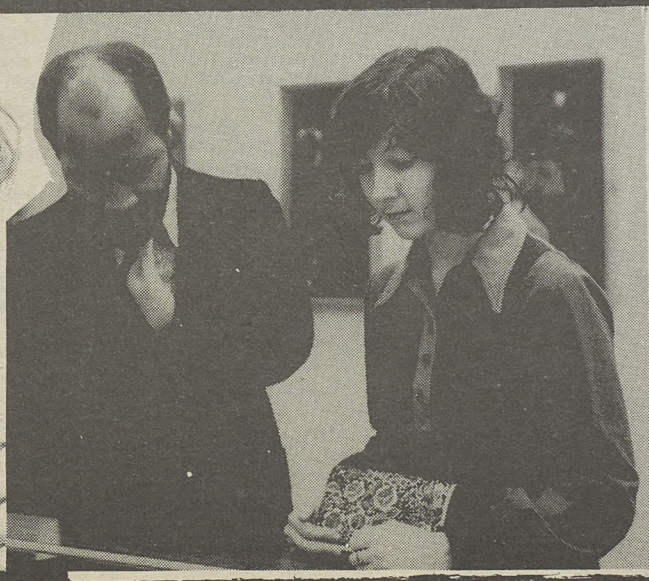
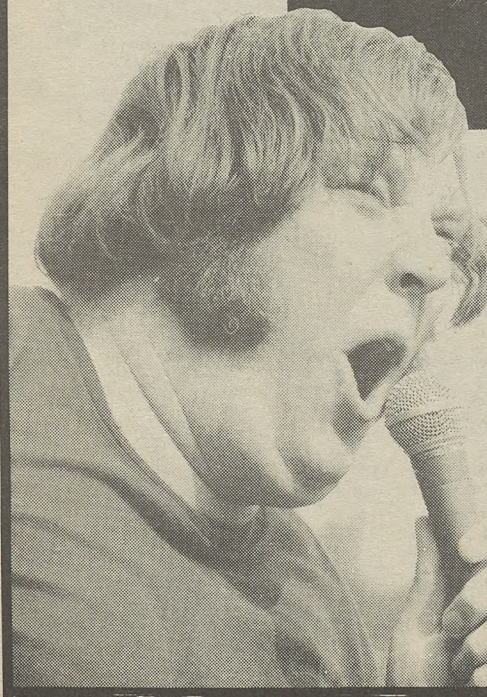
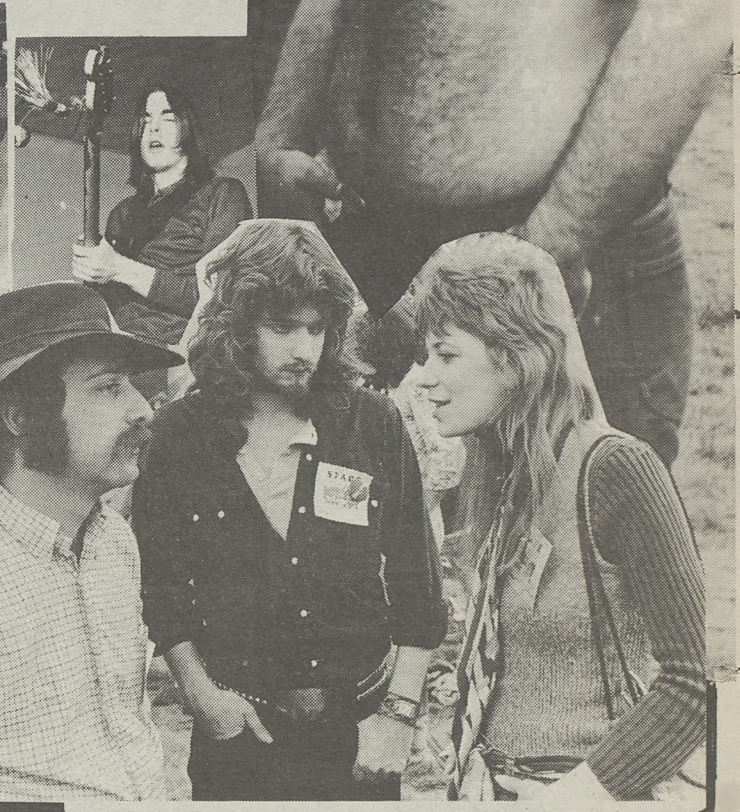
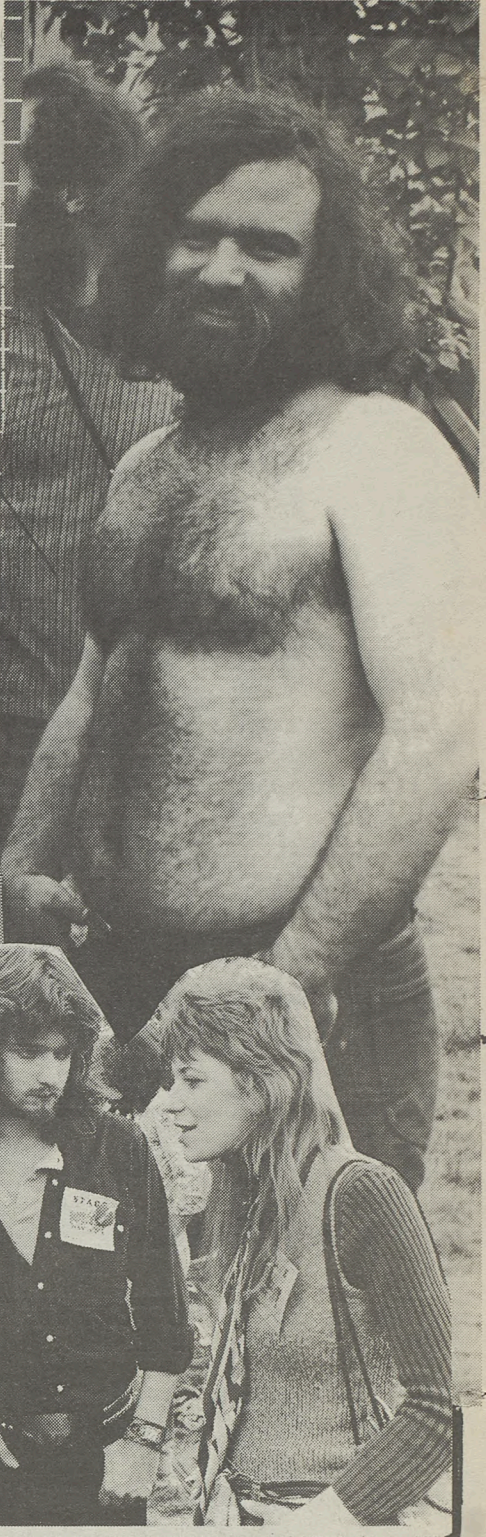
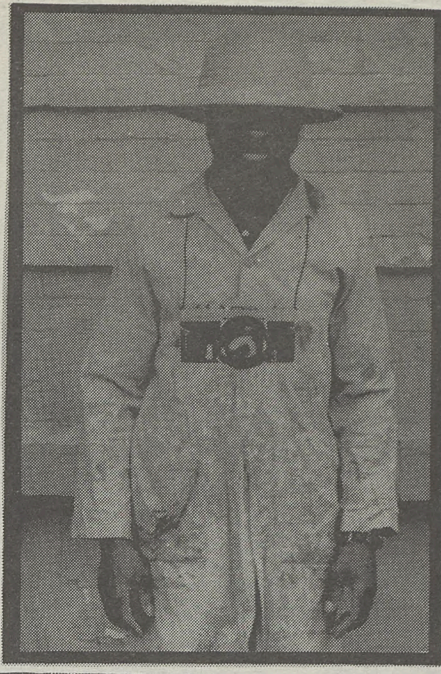
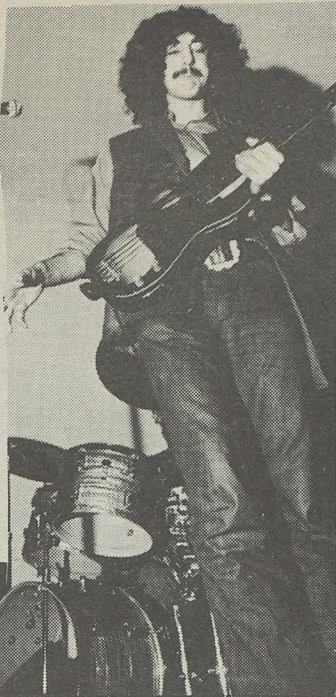
The club is one of the few in the area that gives musicians complete artistic control of their product—unlike most clubs which force bands to render note-perfect imitations of whatever happens to be popular on the radio at the time. As a result of this freedom (adults who can't relate to rock music as "culture" notwithstanding), The Emergency is a very real cultural, as well as social, center for the young.

The kids who run the club on a shoestring have kept it open for a year and a half and feel they can continue if the hall can be rented out for outside affairs during the week (Emergency is open as a rock club only on weekends during the school year). For this to happen, The Emergency has to be classified as a public hall, and as it turns out that presents no problem. The trouble is, the law requires that a public hall provide parking within 800 feet of the establishment. The Emergency has located such parking and has negotiated a rental that is within its meager financial means. For God knows what reason, the D.C. Zoning Board has construed the 800-foot limit to be measure in walking distance, rather than as the crow flies. While the parking lot is less than 800 feet from the club, the patron will have to walk 817 feet from his car to The Emergency, and on these dubious grounds the club will have to close.

Wonder why your kids are so far away from you? Partly, it's because they're being driven away, by such things as the insensitivity of a zoning board, for a lousy 17 feet.

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